

***Beyond Postmodernity: Living and Thinking.
A Nietzschean Journey***

by
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Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose
Kris Kristofferson

To think is to voyage
Gilles Deleuze

On Moving: A Personal Preface

It has always been important for me *to move*. I was born and brought up in Europe, in the closed and narrow confines of the Tyrolean Alps, yet what has always drawn me to North America is the longing for the vastness of its space, the desire to remain itinerant on an ever shifting trajectory, to become-imperceptible under an open horizon. There is something strangely compelling about the open plains and steppes, something that clears the mind and stills the chatter of thought. I believe that this activity of movement for prolonged periods of time has a meditative quality that is enhanced when combined with the emptiness of sky and earth. At junctures in my life I have sought out those unusual physical or mental spaces which disrupt established procedures of living and thinking. At times I have half-jokingly referred to my life as permanent state of exception. The patterns that are so forming can be followed only in hindsight; they constitute a series of positions and trace a path on a map that is constantly being redrawn.

I understand to move in the very sense denoted by its use as verb: as a practice, a doing. Also when used as a noun, *movement*, *motion*, what for me is implied is not so much a quality which a body can possess (to “have” movement), but rather a *being in motion*. “Having motion” implies a pre-given body to which motion is just added as an additional quality. It propels a body through a medium (like space or time), with the body remaining self-identical throughout the movement. “Being in motion,” however, turns moving into a productive category. The being is then not a stability but a becoming. Being in motion is a process of change and transformation in which there is no longer a pre-given stable being that could be defined independently of the motion.

This activity of moving thus affects both living and thinking. It implies an itinerant form of subjectivity that is perceived as a permanent, ongoing becoming. This paper, similarly, is the result of a journey of my thought and my coming to terms with the question of a *beyond* to postmodernity. I have so tried to locate, for myself, the point at which the postmodern venture ends. While I hope that the result may speak also to a potential reader it still remains what it is: only one of many possibilities of narrating this story, the expression made at a certain juncture on a shifting road, at a certain time and space.

The Postmodern State of Affairs: A Very Abridged Overview

I believe that any academic work, any research interest, any approach to a problem and, indeed, what constitutes a problem in the first place, is influenced by the own personal background. Where one comes from makes a difference for what one writes. As for me,

* Smaller parts of this article have been adapted from Koppensteiner, Norbert (2009): “On Moving. Nomadism and (In)security”, in Sützl, Wolfgang and Cox, Geoff (eds.): *Creating Insecurity: Art and Culture in the Age of Security*, New York, Autonomedia, p. 137-151.

philosophically I grew up with the postmodern condition. I think that my generation (the now around-thirties) is perhaps the first one which can say that. Too young to have experienced many of the early struggles around postmodernism I thus took for granted a certain incredulity, doubt and skepticism towards truth – all of which I today identify as hallmarks of the postmodern way of thinking and living. Yet, I also believe that it is exactly under those postmodern conditions of doubt that questions of how to live, how to shape one's life, how to give it a certain form loom especially large. If the grand narratives are found to not be able to provide the security they always promised, if all truth is open to contestation and thus can no longer easily provide a firm ground on which to stand on, if those very foundations of metaphysics are taken to have become dubious or deconstructed, if the promises of Christianity, science, Enlightenment and progress have become fundamentally doubtful then the question of how to live one's life and how to think about this very fact of living loom large - because the answers are no longer self evident. What has raised my interest and what I would like to probe more deeply in this paper is the question of the relation between living and thinking. It is this, I believe, an old question to which always new, or at least different, preliminary answers need to be found – without ever settling the subject as closed.

The way we conceive the relation between living and thinking deeply concerns the way we perceive our being-in-the-world. How thought relates to life shapes how we view our own existence. Ever since Platonic times the West has chosen a distinct way of dealing with the relation between thinking - and its fruit knowledge - and lived experience. With the ancient Greek invention of the Truth as an intellectual concept a standard of measurement had been crafted with which life and experience could be judged as either true or false. True in the Post-Socratic sense is only the world of ideas, whereas the world of the senses remains appearance. The Truth so promises certainty and a solid standard for decisions, over the ages it beckoned with the pledge that life – lived experience – can be measured against a rational yardstick which tells us whether what we experience really is the case or is, indeed, only an illusion – mere shadow. Ever since Platonic times thinking has had predominance over life in the West. Thinking judges life. Thought is the final arbiter on whether what is perceived is really true.

For centuries the West so set out under this heading to judge all kinds of experiences as false because they cannot be rationally affirmed. *Superstitious, unenlightened, irrational* but also *mad, sick* or *abnormal* are only some of the qualifications for those lives which are not lived in accordance with the prevailing standards of thought. The *visionary* has become suspicious and the *prophet* should best go see a doctor to cure her/him of this affliction. Under the rule of thinking life is mutilated, becomes subdued, disciplined and normalized. What so ultimately remains in modernity is the choice between “mediocre lives and mad thinkers,” that is, between “lives that are too docile for thinkers, and thoughts too mad for the living” (Deleuze, 2001: 67).

I believe that postmodernism as intellectual enterprise can be understood as the attempt to free life from its judgment by thinking. Life and the appreciation of lived and immanent experience are central preoccupations in postmodernism. What this implies for postmodernism as philosophical approach is the paradoxical attempt to dissolve by rational means the hegemony of that rational thought which has ruled the West for such a long time. While the modern approach deems false any experience that is beyond the rational, postmodernism wants to retrieve those lived moments from their oblivion. Living is to gain its own right once more.

Yet, if life is to be spared the judgment through thought, as goes the postmodern argumentation, one has to refrain from once more integrating experiences into a higher order of thought. The affirmation of life cannot take place in the name of yet another justificatory ideal or standard. Doing so would exactly imply falling back into that which one rejects – measuring life through thought. Thus, whenever a rift opens up between life and thinking -

between what we experience and what we rationally hold true - the postmodern approach is to acknowledge and embrace the contradiction, without attempting to resolve it.

Postmodernity so brings with it the realization that thought may, indeed, not be superior to life, yet this statement is not borne out of the realization of some higher order of truth, but on the contrary out of a state of mind of doubt that marks the postmodern condition. This postmodern mindset is defined, as Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984: xxiv) famously argues, by its “incredulity towards meta-narratives”. This turns not certainty, belief or knowledge but much rather doubt, skepticism and disenchantment into the defining features of postmodernity. Postmodernity thus is the state of mind of not being certain, of doubting, of often painfully becoming aware of the contradictoriness of the own existence - yet without attempting to resolve it. It implies accepting, indeed embracing and celebrating this lack of foundation as the perpetual potentiality of lived existence.

To summarize: as I have argued postmodernism is the attempt to free life from the prison of thinking. Yet since it does want to neither integrate the two into a higher order nor just turn the tables and deny thinking, both postmodernity and postmodernism remain with a permanent questioning. And it is this very feature of a permanent, ongoing investigation, the refusal-to-settle from which the postmodern venture derives its impetus. Postmodernism so affirms doubt as both method of thinking and mode of living. To live a postmodern life implies turning away from all hopes of a final reconciliation and resting point. Doubt leads to ever new ventures and projects, but it does not guide towards the contentment of a final resting point.

Taking heed of some of the postmodern critique but dissatisfied with embracing insecurity and doubt has led some theorists - like Ken Wilber (1996, 2000) and Ervin Laszlo (2007) to eagerly want to move ahead and go beyond this whole postmodern venture, leaving behind what they believe to be only the “flatlands” (Wilber, 2000) beyond which the truly higher peaks of enlightenment lie. Jettisoning the key postmodern approach of incredulity towards metaphysics Wilber claims a higher state of human evolution in which thinking and living can once more be unified. Giving rational thinking its space but integrating and lifting it into a higher order what is so attempted is a *holistic* reconciliation of what has remained rationally contradictory. Postmodernity, Wilber points out, is true but only partial, whereas his holistic approach (while also partial) is more inclusive and thus of a higher order.

The postmodern critique of Wilber is that his project once more sets up a system of strong thinking, claiming to possess a standard of classification in the name of a higher truth. This in turn, from a postmodern perspective, is once more fraught with the violent propensities of any evolutionary system and its corresponding distinction between those who are higher and the unfortunate lower ones. That this critique is not just shared by postmodern authors but also arises from within the field of transpersonal and transrational theory within which Wilber locates himself is proven by the lucid critique of Jorge N. Ferrer. Ferrer (2002) criticizes Wilber’s work on very similar accounts and charges it with *perennialism* and an *inner empiricism* inspired by Karl Popper which ultimately leads back to the modern Cartesian mindset which Wilber professes to have overcome.

Yet also within the postmodern tradition itself there has emerged what Gianni Vattimo (1999: 29) calls a growing “disenchantment with disenchantment”. The question whether it really is possible to live and think in a condition of permanent incredulity and doubt has surfaced with renewed urgency. Spinning this question further Vattimo asks if belief can really be denied. The sensitive reception of this problem has led him to a careful re-engagement with Christianity. In his recent writing, Vattimo (1997) so embarks onto a journey that tries to keep postmodernity’s pertinent warnings about the violence of strong, metaphysical, thinking yet still *weakly* engages with a Catholic tradition of belief deeply ingrained into the culture of Italy, Vattimo’s country of origin. Unlike Wilber, Vattimo argues that the relation one can establish with metaphysics is not one of *overcoming* – as the

perpetual movement of higher unifications which increasingly become more true - but on the contrary, one that “cannot do otherwise than establish a relation of *Verwindung*: one of resigned acceptance of continuation, of distortion” (Vattimo, 1997: 53). He so comes to understand secularization as one necessary step *within* Christianity, which helps towards freeing the Christian tradition from the violence of metaphysics.

What especially has called my attention in this emergent debate is this curious moment in some of the postmodern authors which amounts to a point of transformation in their lives and in their thinking and which seems to herald something different, something that can no longer be understood on postmodern grounds. Gianni Vattimo here is the most explicit example. Yet, I would argue that also in the writings of Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Francois Lyotard or Michel Foucault there remain traces and fleeting images of something else. Those traces, as this paper will show, at times derive from a Nietzschean vein. This is especially clear in the case of Gilles Deleuze who, towards the end of his life, seems to have undergone a transformation of sorts, turning to something that does no longer entirely fit within the postmodern frame of doubt. Similar could be said about the late Foucault and his careful and meticulous examination of the question of philosophy and spirituality in his 1981/82 course at the Collège de France on the *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault, 2005).

Using the notions of living and thinking as guiding threads this paper is an attempt to trace some of those elements through postmodernity and outline a brief sketch of what might be perceived beyond. It is thus a probing and sounding out of certain thinkers – mainly Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze – to see how far postmodernity reaches, to get to a clearer notion of the moment at which it ends and arrive at an idea of how far beyond their thinking can take us.

Nietzsche: Apollo and Dionysius

In his unorthodox first book *The Birth of Greek Tragedy* (1967a), originally published in 1872, Friedrich Nietzsche investigates the ancient Greek art form of tragedy. In this work Nietzsche reveals himself to be largely unconcerned with historical proof¹. His point of interest is not so much about the ancient Greeks, but he uses Greek antiquity as starting point for a critique of the intellectual climate of his surroundings and time. Michel Foucault aptly summarizes this method derived from Nietzsche: “One ‘fictions’ history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one ‘fictions’ a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth” (Foucault, 1980: 193). Such a fiction is not overtly concerned with historical objectivity, it is a production, a creation and transformation of current reality; fiction here is as much a verb as a noun.

Tragedy, Nietzsche so argues, for the Greeks was no mere form of entertainment, not just a pleasurable diversion or distraction. It was, much rather, a means of celebrating and enacting their cosmovision. Expressed in tragedy were two principles which stand for two crucial elements in the Greek perception of self, society and cosmos. The *Dionysian* element is symbolized by the dithyrambic chorus, by the collective music. In Wolfgang Dietrich’s (2006, 2008) interpretation of Nietzsche it projects the energetic moment of life, the wild, exuberant element of becoming in all its generative power. This Dionysian element of the chorus is contrasted in tragedy with the individual figure of the hero protagonist. This protagonist stands for the *Apollonian* element, as the individual figure and moment of individuation, but also the aesthetic, form and thinking. Thus one encounters life, energy, content in the Dionysian and thinking, form, aesthetic in the Apollonian. What is striking about this picture is that Nietzsche perceives those two elements neither as a duality nor dialectic, but sees them engaged in a perpetual and precarious balancing act. While they retain

¹ Cf. Dietrich, 2008: 169ff.

their contradictoriness they also are coupled and partially fused, in a manner in which the one to a certain degree is inherent to the other.

Greek pre-Socratic existence, according to Nietzsche's (1967a) vision, was a permanent balancing act between the two, an ongoing attempt to find ever new ways of relating the Apollonian and Dionysian within the self and in society. What emerges thereof is a cosmovision which is local, contingent and relational and perpetually transitory, as Apollo and Dionysius are not always evenly matched and the balance and fusion needs to be found each day anew, according to concrete circumstances. It is this a cosmovision in which form and energy, or thinking and life, are coupled in a fruitful union without therefore being collapsed into a *One*. Tragedy is nothing other than the theatric enactment of this cosmovision.

This perception, Nietzsche famously claims, was broken apart by the advent of Socratic/Platonic thought. This is at the same the birthing scene for a specifically Western brand of philosophy. Socrates – “theoretical man” (Nietzsche, 1967a: 18) destroys the balance by giving precedence to one of its elements – the Apollonian thinking and form. Lou Salomé comments that in Nietzsche's work Socrates stands for the “archetype of all thinkers who wish to master life through rational thought” (Salomé, 2001: 101). With the Platonic invention of an abstract category of thought – the *truth* – this turn is fully corroborated. The truth becomes an ideal of form, of thought, an absolute category which holds valid at all times and places. The balance between Apollo and Dionysius is violently severed. The Apollonian category of the truth becomes the overarching standard, the measure against which all of existence now can be evaluated. Instead of a local, contingent, relational cosmovision perceived as balancing act, the post-Socratic Mediterranean area so successively arrives at an abstract code of conduct against which life can be judged. This cosmovision, as Wolfgang Dietrich argues (2008: 107ff), over the centuries turns *moral*. With the advent of Christianity Dionysius is relegated to the dark as Satan and Apollo is equated with Christ. Subsequently it becomes *modern* and mechanistic when Man replaces God as primary mover of the world scene. From an unchecked Apollonian hegemony there in turn spring the institutions of State (first Polis, then Empire and Nation State) and Church.

The problem that arises with this invention of the truth is twofold: first, anybody claiming to either possess or be on the road towards an absolute, universal truth becomes a threat to her/his neighbors. Once truth is absolute everybody thinking and living differently can only be either wrong and then need to be shown the light; or evil and then need to be purged. This concept of truth has an inbuilt propensity for violence. This propensity devastatingly actualized itself over the centuries in the relentless zeal to missionize, civilize or develop those perceived as *Other*. This Platonic/Socratic break, however, also has a second and internal consequence: the hegemony of the Apollonian implies the suppression of the Dionysian in oneself and the own society. Nietzsche famously calls this the beginning of neurosis as “White Man's disease” (Dietrich, 2008: 262).

The Socratic moment for Nietzsche (1968) marks the crucial turning point, the beginning of European nihilism. *Nihilism* – the will to nothingness – has ever since characterized Europe. Several stages can be discerned and what unites all of them is an increasing devaluation of all values. What furthermore characterizes this nihilism is that it is at bottom *reactive* - that is, it is unable to create new values or inspire new forms of living.

After the initial Socratic rupture, nihilism proceeds in seven stages²: (1) ressentiment, (2) bad conscience, (3) death of God, (4) the higher men, (5) the last man, (6) the man who wants to die. Each of these stages is accompanied by a certain form of existence; a certain character type corresponds to it. The final and most interesting stage - (7) midnight - marks both the completion and dissolution of nihilism – the beginning transmutation of all values.

² For those stages see also Deleuze, 2001.

Nietzsche (1967b, 1968) psychologically characterizes Christian morality as *ressentiment* and *bad conscience* and singles them out as the first two stages of nihilism. The human being of *ressentiment* turns outwards and morally judges others. The second stage, *bad conscience* or *guilt*, is of the same morally condemning kind, but turned inwards against oneself. These first two stages of nihilism play themselves out under the rule of a (Christian) God. It is God who guarantees the moral world order and is there as ultimate reference point and final arbiter on good and evil. And, since God's final judgment still has not occurred, His priestly representatives on earth claim this power of judgment in His stead.

At the turn from a moral to a modern cosmovision (Dietrich, 2008: 185ff.), nihilism advances one step with the *death of God*. In most of the many renderings Nietzsche gives of this moment it is either Man that kills God or God himself chokes on the pity he feels for man. In a crucial section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1976a: 375ff) it is the *ugliest man* who kills God, because he can no longer tolerate God's pity. The ugliest man kills God, but remains beholden to the moral world order out of which the modern is yet to emerge: the murder he commits is driven by *ressentiment* towards God's pity and afterwards he is riddled with *bad conscience*.

In the secular beginning of modernity the *higher man* then attempts to take Gods now vacant throne. In Descartes *Cogito* the "I" shall take the place of God. Not the divine being but we ourselves, the stable and coherent "I" that is self-grounded and looks out onto the world shall provide the point of anchor from which everything else derives. Nietzsche calls this the higher men: those who want to elevate themselves to the status of God.

Yet, Nietzsche concludes once more, as long as the belief in God really is only replaced by the belief in Man nothing is gained. The same values still hold whether we believe in God or in Man: paradise is now no longer promised in the afterlife but as a man-made heaven on earth to be reached through perpetual progress. The higher men are like camels which, after the death of God, now voluntarily continue to carry the same burden of the old values and judgments which now have turned secular and immanent.

Also the death of God turns out to be only an intermediate step and the higher men's aspirations of Man as eternal referent prove to be built on sand: the death of God is followed by the death of Man. This event, heralded already in Nietzsche's thinking, is developed further in the work of such twentieth century thinkers as Michel Foucault (1972, 1994). The shocking suspicion Nietzsche arrives at is that also this Man is not an essence or stable figure in which the world could find grounding but is a mere fiction of the grammatical kind. What only enables the notion of substantiality, of essence, is the modern grammar which gives predominance of a noun ("I") that is stable over a verb that is flux ("think"). Nietzsche calls "mythology" the idea that "every change must have an author" (Nietzsche, 1968: 288) and inverts this relation with the insight that there might, in fact, be no doer behind the deed:

"There is thinking, therefore there is something that thinks": this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation. But that means positing as "true a priori" our belief in the concept of substance – that when there is thought there has to be something "that thinks" is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed. In short, this is not merely the substantiation of a fact but a logical-metaphysical postulate – Along the lines followed by Descartes one does not come upon something absolutely certain but only upon the fact of a very strong belief. (Nietzsche, 1968: 268)

Instead of this belief in a stable being Nietzsche poses a *doing* – a living, breathing, loving, writing, speaking etc. without the coherence of a stable subject behind it. Humans are perpetually engaged in doing and thus *becoming*, but stable *being* is nowhere to be found. Nihilism – the will towards nothingness – thus advances another crucial step when after the form of God also the form of Man is deconstructed. Once this double belief is lost humanity

realizes itself to be an “orphaned multiplicity” (Sloterdijk, 1993: 50) with no more promises of salvation and deliverance to soothe the own fears. This “we” of humanity is then, first of all, a fragile community of loss – namely the loss of security, stability and of even the certainty that any community or an individual *good life* can still be had at all in this new landscape. Nietzsche, in his own poetic language, gives a compelling picture of the feeling of loss after this double death – that of God and Man:

Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is the night not continually closing in on us? (Nietzsche, 1974: 181)

Gone have, with the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche, the idea of *things as such* and values simply accepted as true: “existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking” (Nietzsche, 1968: 13). God, Man and with it the own identity and everything that holds the world together have then been devalued and perceived as meaningless. However, the nihilistic judgment still is not complete. The second but last stage of the will to nothingness is reached when nihilism actively and destructively turns against the own life. The *last man* deems everything to be hopeless and just wishes to passively fade away, yet turns into the man who actively *wants to die*. With the image of the man who wants to die nihilism is completed and all values – including the one placed on the own existence - have been dissolved. This is the moment when the night is the deepest and all appears lost, yet it also marks the turning point. Giving Nietzsche’s philosophy a psychological interpretation one could call this painful juncture the moment of the ego-death.

Nietzsche calls it the moment of *midnight* at which, once everything has been let go off, the scene is ready for something new to emerge. Midnight - the deepest night and darkest hour – is the instant when nihilism is completed, yet it also is the point at which it loses its hold and life appears in a new light. Midnight marks the crucial turning point when the negativity and judgment of nihilism switch into the positivity of affirmation. Midnight so is not just the darkest hour but simultaneously also the beginning transmutation of all values, when the negation of nihilism is superseded by an affirmative ‘yes’ to life. When the man who wants to die dissolves the own ego, simultaneously also the *veil of maya* is lifted and a new figure becomes possible: the *Overman* as being who sees the world unclouded by resentment or bad conscience and affirms it as such. The world continues being ungrounded, unfounded, without fetters or eternal rules which hold it together, but the Overman, as somebody who has gone through nihilism, is strong enough to affirm it as such. Midnight marks the end of the rule of thinking over living. Life is once more affirmed as it appears.

If there is no essence or soul tying the human being invariably to its identity, then this implies that there is a concrete horizon of freedom now opening up. Nietzsche’s philosophy so turns into a saying ‘yes’ to life which is neither born out of some Platonic ideas or pure truth nor clichés of *perpetual peace* nor from moralistic rejections. It arises out of the struggles of nihilism and the condition of doubt. Yet, it does not remain with doubt and nihilism. Beyond the realms of God and Man, beyond morality this philosophy opens a horizon of possibility.

The Overman is the being which once more is able to balance Apollo and Dionysius, life and thinking. She makes space in the own existence for both form and energy. The Overman, however, can not be confused with a kind of comic-strip *Superman*. Nietzsche clearly distinguishes this idea of the Overman from the previous nihilistic *higher men*. It is the higher men who deem themselves to be a new ideal form of humanity – but in point of fact remain part of reactive nihilism, of judgment and morality. The Overman, on the contrary,

does not hold herself to be a higher being, but lives the own existence as permanent, open, fluid and ongoing attempt to balance Apollo and Dionysius. The Overman in this sense is *beyond good and evil* and has no need to resort to judgment or violence.

Nietzsche so begins to outline the notion of the Overman as philosopher of the future. Yet this concept in Friedrich Nietzsche remained a fledgling, something “embryonic” and “not yet fully functional” (Deleuze, 1988: 130). As Wolfgang Dietrich (2008: 301) points out, it is in the works of Gilles Deleuze that many of Nietzsche’s ideas reappear in the twentieth century – as for example Apollo and Dionysius do in the Deleuzian guise of life and thinking.

In order to better grasp this Nietzschean notion of the Overman I will now, in an intermediate step, take a closer look at those concepts of life and thinking around Gilles Deleuze. In the next chapters I will thus use the work of Gilles Deleuze to highlight three different steps: (1) the Deleuzian nomadic life before midnight, (2) the moment of midnight itself and, tentatively, (3) a beyond postmodernity.

I will argue that the Deleuzian concept of the *nomad* already takes heed of many of the Nietzschean ideas, yet ultimately still belongs to nihilism. What Deleuze calls becoming-imperceptible marks the moment of transition towards midnight. The moment of midnight itself is what Deleuze signals with the term *a life*. To contrast the notion ‘a life’ at midnight, I will work out the notion of ‘life’ as it is understood before and after midnight using two versions of the concept of *zoe* as they emerge from the work of Giorgio Agamben and Rosi Braidotti. In the final section I will once more return to Friedrich Nietzsche, drawing the findings of the paper together towards a more concrete picture of the Overman and its relation to life and thinking.

A Nomad’s Life

I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing I will be looking for a weapon
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 277)

Working almost a century after Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze uses the figure of the nomad as starting point for a postmodern form of investigation. Nomads, Deleuze argues, through their very way of living have at all times provided a counter-concept and resistance to the sedentariness of Empires and states. Nomadic thinking and living refuses to be captured by the belief in formalized, abstract religions or the apparatuses of the state and instead opts for the open horizon of the desert or plains with its possibilities of movement:

The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys an autonomy and direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 380)

In the vast spaces of the steppe *movement* becomes a trajectory which knows neither beginning nor end, but only intermediate points of location – oases and grazing grounds which are reached only to be left again for somewhere else. And nomadic space itself is no fixed constant, but variable, open and unbounded. Nomadic space is defined by the trajectories that traverse its surface and thus it knows points of reference, yet no overall fixed structure:

The sand desert has not only oases which are like fixed points, but also rhizomatic vegetation that is temporary and shifts location according to local rains, bringing changes in the direction of the crossings. [...] Their variability, the polyvocality of

directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 382)

The very cartography remains variable and is defined in terms of the trajectories that are possible at a given moment. Routes and movements fluctuate. Nomadic spaces are defined by the relations and movements that traverse them. Relations and movements are not just something added to an already pre-existing space but are its characteristic. More than just a figure of thought the nomad also is a certain way of combining thinking and living towards a fruitful union. The key features characterizing Deleuzian philosophical nomadism are *movement, difference and resistance*.

Movement, for the nomad is not simply a means of getting from point A to B, but is an intrinsic figure for a way of thinking and living. In philosophical nomadism “to think is to voyage” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 482). Nomadic thinking is ungrounded. Nomadic living implies leading the own life as a permanently ongoing, open searching and questioning that never settles on any ultimate point. Instead of the settlement of a stable, coherent identity the own life so turns into a perpetual transformation and is seen as a process of permanent, unfinished becoming.

Nomadic living and thinking still know concrete points of reference at any particular moment in time and space, a current trajectory can still be plotted and it still is possible to place oneself against a concrete horizon. Living nomadism it still is possible to engage in concrete relations. Thinking nomadism does not mean *anything goes* – interpretations and values remain possible as long as they are perceived as local and contingent, and thus no longer as absolute truth. What remains foreign to nomadism is the idea of an ultimate aim which, once it has been reached, would imply an end to the journey. Any particular point in life, any particular thought or concept will always lead somewhere else. Nomadism thus is a perpetual search which no longer aims for any final answer but derives its impetus from keeping the investigation open.

The second characteristic, *difference*, implies the lack of a unifying coherent structure that would reduce multiplicity to a One. As every point of location is only temporary and takes a backseat against the more important “in between” of the journey, nomadic thinking and living is plural from the outset and forms non-linear sequences of multiplying differences which never collapse into identity. Every nomadic “I” is a shifting severality instead of a coherent individuality. Deleuze here takes up and advances the Nietzschean hypothesis that the subject is not a unity but a multiplicity. Nietzsche has sketched the question from which Deleuze departs:

The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary, perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thoughts and our consciousness in general? (Nietzsche, 1968: 270)

Nomadic becomings are a refusal to believe in the coherent subject, nomadism is a practice of displacing the own identity and celebrating it as an open multiplicity which is constantly shifting, emerging and fading. Becoming so implies lines of flight and vectors of transformation. In Deleuze lines of flight and vectors stand for uncertain and changing routes of passage through which parts of this subject-multiplicity are constantly transformed. The nomadic subject thus is engaged in an ongoing becoming partially-other. Rosi Braidotti captures the idea of such nomadic becomings-in-difference:

Nomadic becomings are rather the affirmation of the unalterably positive structure of difference, meant as a multiple and complex process of transformation, a flux of

multiple becomings, the play of complexity, or the principle of not-One. (Braidotti, 2006: 145)

Movement and difference understood as the play of a perpetually transforming, open multiplicity thus are nomadism's first two key features. Combining the two is *becoming* which implies both an ongoing transformation (movement) and the production of difference. Driving those first two features onwards is the nomadic refusal to be captured by the sedentariness of certainty, belief or truth. This gives rise to the third characteristic - *resistance*. State, morality, religion and Church, truth, metaphysics and generally all unifying concepts which would end the journey are rejected:

The universalist religions that have had dealings with nomads – Moses, Mohammed, even Christianity with the Nestorian heresy – have always encountered problems in this regard, and have run up against what they have termed obstinate impiety. These religions are not, in fact, separable from a firm and constant orientation, from an imperial de jure State, even, and especially, in the absence of a de facto State; they have promoted an ideal of sedentarization and addressed themselves more to the migrant components than to the nomadic ones. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 383)

Against all centralizing tendencies nomadism pits a permanent decentering. Against the apparatus of the state, against the normalizing techniques of psychoanalysis, against anything that wants to *ascribe* her the own being, the nomad is always prepared to take flight, always ready to let herself be swallowed by the steppe or get lost in the desert. While life so turns into a “resistance to power” (Deleuze, 1988: 92) nomadic thought refuses metaphysical, unified, thinking that recurs to a final ground (like Man or God) because it is considered hostile to difference. Yet nomadism is not only evasive: the nomadic journey of thought leaves multiplicities in its wake, it is intended to fragment and dissolve the *One* and lead to questions where before there were certainties. Nomadism makes the steppe grow. Against certainty it celebrates a dislocating and ungrounding movement, against the unifying *One* (one peace, one God, one subject) it affirms multiplicity and diversity. It is a practice of resistance against everything that tries to produce this *One*; that tries to unify and integrate the subject in a seemingly helpful and benign manner. The nomadic *yes* in Deleuze, for example, thus also is a *no* the psychoanalytic talking cure. The nomad is a figure of resistance and it is this defiant negation which safeguards the affirmation of the multiplicity of living and thinking.

The nomad so turns into a leitmotif of postmodernity. It is driven by a doubt and skepticism that makes it refuse to accept any location as *good in itself* and thus as adequate point of settlement. By the same token, however, nomadism also recurs back to nihilism. The nomad prepares the transmutation, yet it does not cross the point of midnight. It approaches the threshold but stops short of reaching it. While the nomad in a certain sense already places the negativity of nihilism in the service of an affirmation (celebration of the multiplicities which life and thinking create) the nomad on the other hand still needs negativity as impetus from which the nomadic journey gains its drive and movement. In this manner it is reactive and defined by its rejection: that which is to be refused still comes first. Just like the nomad, also postmodernity to which it belongs is not the sign of a new epoch, it is not the creation of new values after the midnight point of the transmutation of all values, but refers back to that which is to be doubted and resisted.

Yet, in Gilles Deleuze that is not all there is to it. What Nietzsche calls the moment of midnight finds a different equivalent in the work of Deleuze. Approaching midnight from the side of the nomad is a specific form of becoming: *becoming-imperceptible* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 232 ff.). Becoming-imperceptible entails a process of fusion with the environment; it is a blending into the surroundings. It implies the gradual dissolution of

individual characteristics. As Rosi Braidotti, one of Deleuze's most astute and incisive readers expresses it:

Becoming imperceptible is the point of fusion between the self and his or her habitat, the cosmos as a whole. [...] It is like a floodgate of creative force that make it possible to be fully inserted into the *hic et nunc*, defined as the present unfolding of potentials, but also the enfolding of qualitative shifts within the subject. The paradoxical price to pay for this is the death of the ego understood as social identity [...]. (Braidotti, 2006 261)

This process of becoming-imperceptible marks the movement of dissolution of the nomad towards midnight, it is the process through which nomadic subjectivity is dissolved, gradually leaves postmodernity, and turns into something different. In Braidotti's (2006: 262) Deleuzian rendering it "marks the death of the self to any notion of identity" by virtue of which even the nomad as permanently itinerant and multiple figure ceases to be.

In this state of becoming the individual that desired (to undergo this process) is already gone and the one who would welcome it is not yet there. Such is the paradox of nomadic subjectivity at the height of its process of becoming-other-than-itself. (Braidotti, 2006: 262)

Oddly enough, this almost seems to reintroduce something like linearity or teleology into the nomadic journey. However, becoming-imperceptible cannot be understood in such a manner as goal and aim of nomadic becomings. It is, much rather, only one of the many forms of transformation that are always leading to somewhere and someplace else. As such it is not the finality and purpose of nomadic becomings but a permanent possibility throughout the whole journey, a potentiality that is present at all times throughout nomadic existence. The possibility that a nomadic subject becomes-imperceptible exists at any point in time and its vector can only be perceived in hindsight. Like all nomadic becomings also becoming-imperceptible is thus chaotic - but neither is it random nor arbitrary. Becoming-imperceptible is still within the nomadic process which ceases only at the point of midnight. Through becoming-imperceptible individuality fades away, but life stands out all the more clearly.

After having arrived at this point a clearer picture of this strange Nietzschean midnight now becomes possible. It is in his last writing, considered by some his testament (Rajchman, 2001: 20) that Deleuze turns to this moment at which nihilism ends and postmodernity ceases. What Nietzsche calls midnight Deleuze terms "a life." Life, bestowed with the indefinite article - *a* life – marks the moment beyond individuality, when all features of identity have dissolved and life appears as *essentiality* – singular yet indefinite. What fades through becoming-imperceptible are all characteristics which clearly distinguish *this* life, *my* life. What emerges is a life:

The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens. [...] It is the haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life of a man who no longer has a name, although he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life... (Deleuze, 2001: 28, 29)

In the moment so described, individuality has been washed away and what is left is the singularity of a life standing out indelibly. At this point Gilles Deleuze leaves postmodernity and steps onto a threshold. A life, even if it does not fully reach *over* midnight, can no longer be understood in either postmodern or nomadic terms. A life is no longer characterized by movement, difference and resistance. It just is. A life marks the point of midnight. Unlike nomadism in which all perception is local, contingent and relational and thus always emerges from a concrete horizon, a life is “beyond the aporias of subject and object,” and “no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act” but it poses an “absolute and immediate consciousness” (Deleuze, 2001: 27).

When individuality and the past fall away, what becomes possible at midnight is an “affirmative present” (Braidotti, 2006: 260) that is beyond nihilism. It enables the transmutation of all values “which will propel us out of the void of critical negativity, into the paradoxical void of positivity, or full affirmation” (Braidotti, 2006: 262). In an almost mystic turn Braidotti (2006: 261) concludes that one “has to die to the self in order to enter qualitatively finer processes of becoming.”

On the other side, beyond midnight, awaits the Overman. A life so is the bridging element between the Deleuzian nomad and the Nietzschean Overman, between postmodernity and something no longer defined by its nihilistic reference to modernity. Midnight, the moment of the transmutation of all values, a life, can be ascribed to neither side but remains in between, necessary yet inscrutable and thus indeterminable.

Having thus approached midnight one is now in a better position to begin to sketch the process beyond. I will do so by first - following once more Rosi Braidotti – outlining the concept of life after midnight by contrasting it with a notion of life previous to that point, before finally, in the last section, combining life and thinking in the figure of the Overman.

Life: Before and After Midnight

In light of the discussion so far it is now possible to re-take the notion of life at the different stages: while nihilism judges life, the Overman affirms it. In between the two, between the nihilistic, critical negativity and the ‘yes’ of the Overman stands Deleuze’s *a life*.

With Braidotti (2002, 2006) it becomes possible to contrast the two moments before and after midnight via her rendering of two different understandings of life as *zoe*. The nihilistic, critical, concept of life is the one which she finds in the writings of Giorgio Agamben. This author understands *zoe* in a postmodern manner as *bare life*.

To recapitulate the crucial point: in parts of his recent work Agamben (1998, 2002, 2005) problematizes the modern legal system upon which societies are built by re-taking the *decisionistic* legal theory of Carl Schmitt. Sovereign, according to Schmitt (1985), is he who decides upon the state of exception – who decides when the rule does not apply and what (who) has to remain outside of the legal sphere on which the political is built. Only on this fundamental exclusion is, according to Agamben, the fully political life (*bios*) in Western societies established. What has to remain outside is *bare life (zoe)*, the life that does not count as political and, in extreme cases, does also not count as *life* and therefore can be killed without (legally) committing homicide. The only distinguishing feature of this bare life then becomes the fact that it is not (yet) dead (Agamben, 1998; 2005). Bare life remains outside of the realm of positive subjectivation. In Agamben it is only upon this fundamental exclusion that the sphere of the political is established in which life that counts as fully human can take place. Braidotti contends that this idea of bare life on whose excluded inclusion rests the full, political, human life (*bios*) remains an argument out of the negative:

This view is linked to Heidegger's theory of Being as deriving its force from the annihilation of animal life. Agamben perpetuates the philosophical habit of taking mortality or finitude as the trans-historical horizon for discussions of 'life'. The fixation on Thanatos – which Nietzsche criticized over a century ago – is still very present in critical debates today. (Braidotti, 2006: 39)

Agamben's zoe is that which is always already lost and absent, it is life as forever receding horizon. With Friedrich Nietzsche one can so understand this postmodern concept of zoe as a moment of critical nihilism: the affirmation of bios remains tied to the more fundamental negativity of zoe.

Judith Butler (2004) approaches the concept of life from a very similar starting point. Contending that a universally shared human condition is (yet) nowhere in sight she asks which lives – *whose* lives – fully count as lives. In face of the fact that the violence perpetrated around the world only sometimes leads to a public outcry and at other occasions goes literally unnoticed Butler concludes that it is only those lives which can be grieved when they are lost. It is only those lives which can be mourned that fully count as human. In a very unconventional argument Butler holds that it is only after the moment of its loss that the preceding life, quasi ex-post, so receives its validation. She approaches the question of life from its absence:

Loss has made a tenuous “we” of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire. (Butler, 2004: 20)

Life here is once more thought from its finitude, from lack and the gaping void that is left by its absence. In this understanding, life is irreducibly precarious and defined by the powers of mourning and violence (of loss). It is the lack that is felt when it is gone that is the starting point for Butler's considerations of life. In a manner not dissimilar to Agamben she arrives at a notion of life as fleeting horizon, perceived only when it has ceased.

Against the nihilistic concept of zoe as bare life and against life defined via its absence, Rosi Braidotti conceptualizes her own understanding of zoe as the fullness of life, the potency (*potentia*) inherent in all beings. Zoe, in its positive plenitude is the “generative inhuman energy” (Braidotti, 2006: 270). Starting from Henri Bergson's *élan vital* - as it was recast by Gilles Deleuze (2006) - she thinks of zoe as an immanent transcendence which resists sacralization³ yet forms the undercurrent of human becoming. Instead of that which is always already absent and excluded, Braidotti's zoe is always present and embodied. It is inseparably tied to the enfolded (human) being in and through which it manifests. Zoe is that which always is already present “the endless vitality of life as continuous becoming” (Braidotti, 2006: 41), the “power of life” and “vector of transformation” (2006: 109).

Zoe, in this rendering, is the fullness and wild exuberance of life. This leads back to Nietzsche's Dionysius as the *energetic* principle (Dietrich, 2006, 2008). Zoe as fullness, as Dionysian energy is the understanding of life that once more emerges fully after the point of midnight has been passed. Combining those different strands allows a more concrete understanding of the Overman's affirmation.

³ The notion of the sacred that is resisted here can concretely be understood as that which is to be sacrificed (the *sacrificial* as in bare life) and which derives its divinity from a being-forfeit and being absent which enables the positive human life as built upon this sacrifice. This notion of the sacred so relates to the tradition of Christianity after St. Paul: Jesus sacrificed on the Cross - sacrificed for the sins of humanity. This concept of the sacred is thus a moral concept, belonging to the nihilistic stages of guilt and bad conscience.

Life and Thinking: The Overman

The Overman's 'Yes' to the world is the affirmation of zoe – the love of zoe in all its magnificence – in its exuberant, flowing, generative but also cruel and uncaring aspects. This love of zoe is beyond good and evil like zoe itself is a “fundamentally amoral force, the true nature of which is best described in its relentless generative power” (Braidotti, 2006: 223).

The Overman so has to be viewed, Deleuze concludes, as Nietzsche's untimely contribution towards the question of “what new form will emerge that is neither God nor Man?” (Deleuze, 1988: 130) The Overman “frees life” (Deleuze, 1988: 131) from the nihilistic prison in which the concepts of first God and then Man had kept it.

If the human being is no longer pre-ordained according to some divine masterplan, if it is no longer tied to some essence or soul which would make it always unwaveringly the same, then the own life no longer has a permanent shape. It only exists *hic et nunc* - here and now. “What is needful,” according to Nietzsche (1974: 232) is therefore to “give style” to one's existence. Neither tomorrow nor yesterday but now, in this present moment. The devastating realization of meaninglessness and lack of essence shortly before midnight is now exuberantly affirmed as freedom – as open possibility to actively shape the own existence. Form-giving so turns into a crucial task and the Overman is the being who joyfully takes up this charge.

This is done by recurring once more to *both* Apollo and Dionysius, form and energy, thinking and life. In the Overman the Dionysian element of energy, life, is again included, affirmed, and given its space. Yet, as Wolfgang Dietrich (2008: 261) points out, Nietzsche does not just turn the tables to elevate life to the hegemonic position which thinking had occupied before. What Nietzsche envisions in the Overman is a renewed *balance* between thinking and living, a fruitful unification of contradictions which does not attempt to dissolve them into a *One* but also does not separate them into a duality or dialectic. Life and thinking are neither collapsed into one another, nor separated completely but what arises is a partial fusion in which one to a certain degree is inherent in the other. The Overman is this always precarious balance between life and thinking which has to be tarried out each day anew. Deleuze retraces this balancing act:

It is a complex unity: one step for life, one step for thought. Modes of life inspire ways of thinking; modes of thinking create ways of living. Life *activates* thought and thought, in turn *affirms* life. (Deleuze, 2001: 66)

An active life and affirmative thought - Zarathustra's song (Nietzsche, 1976a: 436) is the praise of this coupling and the first image of the Overman. Through the Overman this balance is given an always temporary shape. Negativity does not simply disappear but is put into the service of a primary affirmation. Beyond nihilism, the figure of the Overman is the constantly striving being, she who has gone beyond nihilism and affirms the world and the own life out of and beyond this nihilistic experience. The “yes” of the Overman is no longer born out of the belief in the idols of a perfect tomorrow or a life after death but is the conscious affirmation of life in all its contingency, flux and multiplicity. This Overman participates in life without judging it - she is beyond good and evil.

What Nietzsche describes in this transmutation from nihilism through the point of midnight into the Overman could also be called a mystic conversion. Nietzsche, and after him Deleuze, so approach a concept of an immanent spirituality beyond the ideas of a moral God, beyond Man and beyond the notion of postmodern doubt. The love of zoe is not the love towards some outside agent, some God or other. It is also not the narcissistic love of the own ego. It is the love towards the creative energy inside oneself. This energy makes us alive yet is beyond each and every one of us as individuals and connects all being. It is the divine inside oneself. The experience of such an immanent divine energy is also encountered in many philosophical systems and spiritual practices. In the Indian Upanishads this realization of

divinity is expressed as the *Tat Tvam Asi*, the “Thou Art That” or “you are the Godhead” (Grof and Bennett, 1993: 164). Stanislav Grof here reminds us of the many different expressions which are used for this realization of unity which, in the end, nevertheless remains beyond words:

The ultimate creative principle has been known by many names – Brahman in Hinduism, Dharmakaya in Mahayana Buddhism, the Tao in Taoism, Pneuma in Christian mysticism, Allah in Sufism, and Kether in the Kabbalah. The basic message in the mystical traditions has been that not only can we connect with the creative principle but each of us, in a sense, is the creative principle. (Grof and Bennett, 1993: 163, 164)

Drawing on roots derived from European mysticism Erich Fromm (2007: 36) describes the notion of *faith* in a similar manner. In what he calls the *being* mode of existence faith is not “in the first place a belief in certain ideas” but much rather an “inner orientation, an attitude.” Referring to the medieval German mystic Master Eckhart he perceives faith to be drawn from an “inner experience of the divine qualities in oneself.” This faith can then be understood as “a continuous process of self-creation”. No higher order of thought guarantees it, but the own “experiential subjective evidence”.

Thus entering the “finer processes of becoming” (Braidotti, 2006: 261) leads us into territories that have remained a minority project in Western philosophy and living for quite some time. But perhaps the moment has come to re-engage with this rationally pathless land beyond midnight in which thinking and living could once more be balanced. For a postmodern skeptic this is, indeed, hard to accept - but exactly therein lie the challenge and adventure.

The Roads Beyond

The aim of this paper was to trace a path through postmodernity in order to see how far beyond some of its thinkers can take us. If the question of whether doubt is actually livable on the long run is still open - and I believe it is - then the task of envisioning alternatives is pertinent. Throughout this paper I have tried to approach a beyond-postmodernity which derives from within the postmodern tradition itself; yet safeguards against some of the problems inherent to the strong thinking of authors like Ken Wilber. What especially has drawn my attention is the turning point, the moment of midnight in Nietzsche or a life in Deleuze. I think that in Deleuzian philosophy a life finds its precursor in the ideas of the nomad and becoming-imperceptible – both of which still follow a postmodern logic.

The nomad is Deleuze’s attempt to conceptualize the affirmation of multiplicity and its creative potential. Yet, in the figure of the nomad (postmodern) resistance still is primary. I think that it is no coincidence that Deleuze and Guattari only were able to develop their affirmative concept of the nomad in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) after they had cleared the ground in their previous *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). Also in their own work, in the two volume series *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the rejection of the homogenizing One in the *Anti-Oedipus* comes before the affirmation of the nomad in the subsequent volume *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Rather than a teleological process whose culmination would be the Overman, I understand becoming-imperceptible as a permanent possibility and constant potential within the human condition. Becoming-imperceptible is still part of the nomadic way of existence, and as such knows no final goal or ultimate aim to strive for. There is no recipe to be followed, no pre-given path that leads to midnight. Becoming-imperceptible can thus be

grasped as a non-linear, rhizomatic, multiplicity of processes of limited reach through which egoic aspects are being transformed.

Because of the above reasons I prefer the Deleuzian use of becoming-imperceptible over the Nietzschean nihilism, although they have related connotations. Nietzsche's nihilism is both the attempt to retake crucial moments in European history and a psychological study of different types of existence. The combination of those insights paved the way for some of Europe's most interesting and original authors in the twentieth century – Gilles Deleuze amongst them. In this sense, becoming-imperceptible as concept only became possible against this background, once Nietzsche's earlier nihilism had cleared the road. Yet to me the notion of becoming-imperceptible and its rhizomatic quality seem to better convey the simultaneity, locality and diversity of those processes of transformation than the nihilistic stages.

Following Dietrich's (2008: 123) interpretation of Karl Jaspers I understand midnight to be unconditional but not absolute. Unconditional implies open as regards content, subjective and geared towards transcendence, whereas the absolute claims objective veracity. Intellectually, midnight is the step beyond postmodern philosophy - even if some postmodern authors stay with us for some time further. In lived experience midnight marks a turn away from the doubt that has led up to this moment. It carries the connotation of a cathartic conversion through which a temporary equilibrium can be (re)gained and new perspectives opened. Perceived this way midnight also does not need to be understood in each instance as the overwhelming experience, the radical break after which everything would be different, but can also be grasped as smaller, recurring moments of change and re-balancing.

The problem which the concept of midnight addresses is the one of the completion of nihilism, the moment(s) when reactive negativity turns into active affirmation. Once more Gilles Deleuze follows in Nietzsche's footsteps, but introduces a slightly different focus. Just like midnight, a life is geared towards the insertion into an active, affirmative present, but adds a different accentuation by highlighting specifically the aspect of life. The negativity it addresses is that of *zoe* as absent and excluded and what it enables is an affirmative understanding of life as present fullness.

The Overman is not the new ideal of humanity. It is Nietzsche's version of a self-actualizing being, characterized by its affirmation of the world in all its aspects. It is the constantly striving being, not a goal that could be striven for or reached in successive stages of enlightenment. The Overman is no state of perfection from which one could look down on the world as; indeed, the Overman is no finished state at all. Instead it is the chiffre for the kind of human being that is engaged in the permanent affirmative task of balancing living and thinking.

Living and thinking then go hand in hand, proceed in the "complex unity" which Deleuze has described. It is based always in the own life and one's reflection on it. The above quote by Deleuze succinctly expressed it: "life *activates* thought and thought, in turn *affirms* life" (Deleuze, 2001: 66). What this complex unity enables is an experiential spirituality. Unlike religious dogma which is defined by the hegemony of thought, experiential spirituality proceeds from the own lived experience and its reflection, from what Erich Fromm above called "experiential subjective evidence" (Fromm, 2007: 36). It finds its expression in the *love of zoe*, the love of that immanently divine element in all of us – an element which we do not own but which connects us beyond our individuality.

I would like to conclude this essay with a more personal reflection on the theme with which it began, namely the art of movement. In doing so I also hope to lend some practical tangibility to the more philosophical investigation rendered above. I began this essay with the observation that prolonged moving, for me, has a certain meditative quality. In my everyday life this is reflected in the practice of running which for me never (only) appeared under the modern aspect of fitness. Running for me much rather symbolizes a small, everyday practice of re-balancing, my own manner of gaining a new equilibrium. In a time when most of my

waking hours are dominated by the work of an academic, by thinking, rational functioning and literally being-in-the-head, running sets free my whole body, my vehicle for experience. In running, as my body starts to move my mind becomes still. During those moments of becoming-in-motion living and thinking can find a new balance. Sometimes I find afterwards that I have gained a new perspective, often one which has rationally eluded me before. It connects me to *zoe*, that which is alive in me. To borrow the words of Gabrielle Roth, that dancing artist and urban shaman, this form of moving has a spiritual quality, one that allows you to “sweat your prayers” (Roth, 1998). For me this is almost akin to a mantra, which has led and is leading me beyond the venture of postmodernity.

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