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## **Bodies within affect. : on practicing contaminating matters through bioart**

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## Epilogue

We are bodies within affect – within mutating and growing relations of transformations. “How to live and practice the contaminating bodies within affect?” thus becomes a futile question, since we are already immersed within contaminations. The question of how to practice becomes rather a question of how to condition the growth and multiplication of that practice, since we tend to enact bodies as if we were autonomous, as if our thoughts were clear and certain. We live in the world of shadows, our knowledge is only partial; nevertheless, we are prone to quickly implement the belief in given categorizations and universalization. And yet, when we breathe, we change, and when we meet we transform each other, multiply and contaminate. Transformations happen imperceptibly, involuntarily, not only within the secured spaces of the clean lab, but also here, on this very page and moment, in a daily life of our many personas and non-personal multiple existence. If we can create the human-pig embryos, multispecies creatures, solar mutants and post-atomic food, can we also live with them all, as them?

When science and technology invent new bodies, new ideas about those bodies, we need new stories, new relations and ways of living and practicing those bodies. We need new modulating practices of thinking and think practicing where art, philosophy and science are not separate, but also do not form a convenient consensus. Rather, the multiple disciplines and bodies need space to be able to continue to challenge each other. We need to think about not only affect, but within affect – within the contaminations, spaces of risks, hesitations and doubt. Creation of spaces of tensions and experimentation becomes a way how to think about implications of affect for the way we practice contaminating matters. In other words, not only “think we must” as Isabelle Stenger, following Virginia Woolf, called

for,<sup>1</sup> but we need to think in a particular way. We need to allow ourselves to take thinking as contamination to be our continuous practice of bodies' transformative relationality.

The contaminating character of affect fosters new challenges and risks. Bodies within affect might be destroyed, changed, multiplied. Contamination as such, rather than being opposite to purity, becomes against the status quo, against the fixed identities. We become contagions of becoming, transemiotic GMOs that need to learn how to think with contagion so that we can further multiply and move, rather than remain fixed, within given hierarchies and segregations. Living within affect demands facing the radical risk of an encounter and the challenge of sustaining that risk and tension between multiple points of view. Sustaining the risk, diffractions and tensions between encountering bodies, species and even disciplines, as this book has demonstrated, becomes a new challenge of thinking and living within affect.

Importantly, the discussed bodies within affect do not suggest a release of tension by finding a common ground, but rather they demand securing the spaces and ways of contamination so that such a common ground does not become fixed and universal. Bodies within affect call for securing difference while differing, so that we are able to think otherwise each time, when encountering, relating with other bodies – be it species, disciplines, thoughts. Inevitably, bodies of affect generate questions of responsibility before the contaminations. The contaminating relationality of affect expresses messiness and risk that rather something to be avoided and managed, needs to be confronted and lived with, gaining, in this way, a perspective that fosters new material sensitivities, existential meanings and importance. But are you ready to touch the navel of our multibody?

Affect implies the understanding of meaning that transverses species division, making meaning a capacity of multispecies. Through continuous material repetitions of contaminations, we can condition encounters between bodies and, in this way, condition their creation of new meanings. This material meanings, rather than driven by the given logic of identification and signification, would respond to material and embodied sense of importance. It is the sense of importance that drives and generates our bodies that we need to learn how to sense, organize and sustain in their modulating transformations. It is a challenge, since how to know what is important, what might be important without prioritizing or excluding others?

Our multibodies create transformative relationality according to conditions of what happen to be impersonal yet vital within a particular relationality. To foster such a notion of material meaning would be to create conditions of continuations of such relationality where new meanings, new arrangements of what becomes important formulate themselves. We need, then, to search for conditions and to experiment with these conditions, but not in order to find a universal method for their material application. Experimentation and search, in that sense, can never be fulfilled, never finished – it becomes a dark and hungry movement of our becoming. We can practice affect so that the relations of contaminations

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<sup>1</sup> Stengers and Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss*, 27–31.

can be continued by repeating the search. We are blind in this world of shadows, but our disability becomes our capacity for the growing urge for relationality, experimentation with what we do not know.

The crucial challenge is, however, how to repeat the practice of such relational experimentations and searching in a way that does not result in us falling into what we habitually consider as our prior sense of self, of identity. After all, it is me, not the multiple, writing this book, in order to prove my academic abilities. I cannot therefore question the very existence of my agency here, can I? Yet, we can find an impersonal multibody that was driving the very thinking and living process of the search.

Thinking with the impersonal is thinking with the collective on the material scale that contaminates and transforms bodies within their relationality and encounters. Multibody of contaminants in this book, like those of G, P, E, B, S, T, C, M, O, S, A, V, becomes not only narrations of affect, little stories of transformation, but your and my new multibody, which we have become while reading. This multibody becomes a dynamic and material condition of how we can practice and continue to condition the practice of affect. Such a notion of agency, which is not one but more, that becomes a multibody of moving and mutating relationality while relating, as impersonal, fosters a different organization of relationality – a different condition of affect. Contamination becomes our immunity from fixation and identity. To live within contamination implies living in constant tension and encounter with the fear of losing once identity.

Bodies of affect foster an ethics of contamination – a condition of creating spaces and encounters so that transformations may occur and be exercised. Through learning and continuing the relations of transformations, by sustaining the tensions of contaminations, we foster not only thinking with affect, but living with the consequences of affect – the contaminating, impersonal, driven by necessity mutating multispecies multibody that we are, again and again, anew. The question is, are we ready to practice the multiple – to practice bodies within affect?