

Katherina T. Zakravsky

Matter Materialized

On Habitus and the Ideal of Material Humanity

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Materialism is a peculiar and somewhat lazy umbrella term when left undefined.

The first problem of a contemporary materialist position that strikes us is the fact that there is no simple enemy. There is no one within the professional arena of discourse who would make a serious claim to being an idealist. Idealism is a term that sank to the trivial use of media. Be it self related or used by others, an idealist is not considered a serious critique of materialism but rather a naïve person who still would not give up his or her idle hopes. In the same trivial sense materialism is not a clear position giving an ontological or normative privilege to matter, materia or reality, but simply the brute matter of fact that in this world only material things count. By closer inspection those material things are neither natural things nor bodies, not even machines, but commodities, status symbols and most of all capital. So the trivial use of materialism displays a semantics that is a complete negation of the ontological sense of materialism – the material things this world supposedly believes in are not material at all but socially constructed phenomena, artificial objects and most of all the real abstraction of exchange value, thus money and capital.

From the point of view of both an ontological and a political materialism this materialist world, the capitalist world in all its cynicism and realism, has to be described as utterly idealist, as being caught in the web of a socially accepted delusion. If one takes this route, the route of a materialist critique of the undeciphered idealist delusions of a given society, one seemingly takes the Marxist route of a classical critique of ideology. This school of thought does not need to be revived, it is still alive in the follow-ups of the Frankfurt School and in several strands of cultural studies and different schools of social, feminist and queer theory. Yet to me that is exactly the problem: if we just go on with the well-known materialist analysis inherited from Neomarxist schools of thought, we would see no reason to re-examine what this vague and loaded term materialism could really mean in the 21st millenium.

If materialism should have a particular use that would allow to make a clear difference between the trivial use of materialism as the idealism of capitalist culture and the affirmative, methodological materialism of a new school of thought and maybe even life, one has to clarify, who is the other to

materialism. What does it stand up against?

One logical candidate is the mainstream constructivism that took hold of social and cultural sciences and academia in general in the 1990ties. If classical Pre-marxist idealism has been a constructivism of the autonomous subject projecting its pure categories of thought onto an undefined world of matter, Nineties constructivism can be labeled an idealism of society.

We all know the by now stereotypical formula that everything is socially constructed, social roles, gender identities, any kind of conviction and habit. As a supposed critique of an essentialism no one would even claim to support this formula is utterly empty and probably nothing but an academic phrasing that can already be understood as a supporting ideology of neoliberalism. The overaffirmation of the social construction of reality, a fact that no one would doubt anyway, could have had another subliminal drift: to create a general climate, a readiness to accept the total extension of copyright law. The permanent mantra about the constructedness of everything would have had the extra meaning of depicting the world in general as a *res nullius*, as an unmarked territory without any given traits or properties allowing anyone to claim private property of a piece of the world who has the legal, economic and rational means to claim tenure of it.

It is hard and painful to admit it, but the profound crisis of the epoch forces us to see clearly: the perfect nominalism of modern art using its autonomy for the declaration of whatever to whatever as the artist sees fit, the glorious power of the totally free artist to create by the act of naming and declaring, and the power of the corporate world to privatize archives of cultural property and to patent any slightly altered organism as private property are fruits of the very same capitalist-idealist-constructivist tree.

If a new materialism can have any edge to it it can only be as a profound and radical analysis and critique of the very long and successful history that binds nominalist epistemology, possessive individualism, private property, authorship, technoscience and real abstraction into one tight and overdetermined knot.

If one tries to gain a distance from this long epoch that dominated Europe and the West since the late middle ages, if one does not go back to Marx but rather to an ethnology of the diversity of human cultures and economies, one can come to the conclusion that the whole of Western culture, Marxism included, has been marked by the idealism of a figure called man who claims possession and dominance over any brute fact of matter that is no legal person, has no intelligence, no intrinsic value and no right to grow for itself and remain itself apart from its use for man. And this

man, on the other hand, can lay claim to that domination and ownership because he is not matter himself; at least not in his entirety. The master of the brute and dumb universe pays a high price for his privilege: he has to split himself into a material and an ideal half. Thus he can only execute his intellectual power over the material world if he can isolate a particular function, a bodiless homunculus within himself that dominates the material aspect of his own self together with the rest of the material world.

We can say that the career of this immaterial homunculus reaches a peak of crystal clear abstraction with Descartes' cogito. We know about the highly neurotic consequences with respect to the psychic and sexual life of the always already male subject of idealism. And we can also form the hypothesis that modern information technology could be understood as the externalization of Descartes' bodiless homunculus of pure thought as machinery whose body is of no importance, even though it clearly has a material part that in fact uses a lot of space, energy and natural resources. The enormous material mass of physically present technology and machinery seems to be one more return of the suppressed body of intelligence; and every time we have to dispose of technological waste, filling the world with the dead bodies of computers, washing machines, expired factory equipment, an act that happens more and more frequently as those machines are built to break quickly, we should feel the weight of that denial.

The obsessive move to isolate a purely disembodied intellectual function, a move of both self-consciousness and abstract rationality, has to be understood as always already linked to a legal and economic system that allows the appropriation of "goods", pieces of the world that have been symbolically isolated from their environment and slightly altered through so called labor.

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The by now already mainstream criticism of this paradigm of the idealism of man as master and owner of all matter seems to tip over to the other extreme. New theories on material agency tend to be highly ambivalent in their concrete use. On the one hand the appreciation of non-human agents finally puts an end to the centuries old myth of dumb matter waiting for the spiritual infusion of man. On the other hand the very same scientific paradigm shift that investigates into complex intelligent systems and assemblies in their interaction can also be used for a cold and nihilist antihumanism paving the way for the industrial production of optimized humans as one more type of commodity. The claim for more rights for animals and non-human existence in general would be inverted and

perverted into the thesis, that humans are indeed also animals, and while animals still do not hold the status of persons, also humans can be finally treated and used as objects once they lack the social and economic capital to defend their legal status as persons. The black market of organ trade in China and the developing countries is proof to that danger. A special problem in that respect would be the readiness of highly desperate persons in need of any income to sell themselves as guinea pigs for medical experimentation; an amazing move to make use of one's formal right to sign contracts and by that very human action turning oneself over to the status of an animal.

Those problems should hint at the necessity to make a clear difference between a materialist critique of classical humanism and the positive stance of an antihumanism for which all humans are animals with the power to dominate other animals and human animals that is not different in kind from any other animal maximizing its domination over the environment, fellow animals and other species. In this understanding science itself, specifically in its application in technology, is nothing but an extremely refined behavioral program conquering and restructuring the environment.

A consequence of this naturalism is the ongoing debate of so called eliminative materialism that tries to propose a consistent neurological theory making all phenomena of consciousness or qualia side-effects of the physical and chemical processings of the brain.

The problem with this effort is a certain self-contradiction -- for why should a phenomenon of digestion want to prove, with all theoretical finesse, that it is indeed a phenomenon of digestion? Aside from that paradoxical ambition of an ambitious self-abolition of mind that theory can not offer more than a far too simple object language for far more complex phenomena. There is no problem with the fact that phenomena of consciousness happen through the metabolism of the brain. This "correlationalist" stance is no big news and could in fact not be otherwise, if we do not stick to Descartes disembodied homunculus of pure thought. Yet by saying that we have not said anything meaningful about those epiphenomena, we have just reduced them, which is in its very ambition a sign for a wide-spread pathology of a new unhappy consciousness that wants to get rid of itself.

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I want to make a clear difference between a materialism as reductionism that just wants to shock the pastor's daughter by pointing out that all her sweet and sublime thoughts are nothing but blurbs

of her brain; and a materialism that is not reduction but abundance.

To make this clear we should remember that the semantic root of matter and material is always connected to motherhood, femininity and birth. In contemporary science and its taste for a somewhat brutal reductionist materialism any slightly informed psychologist can easily make out a pattern of a highly ambivalent identification of the type of the mother son with a rather cruel mother archetype. In the urge to reduce whatever evolved, intellectual, artificial, social, complex, cultural phenomenon to more basic biological or physical functions this mindset seems to be keen on somehow turning back to an ontological womb, to somehow go back into the basic uterus of things where everything was simple and homogenous. Also the rather obsessive, almost fundamentalist ambition of materialist science to finally annihilate the leftovers of a by now minoritarian Abrahamic religion betrays a pathological hatred against anything paternal.

Seen in that light the simple move to negate any profound difference between the human world and other material agents seems more problematic. What would be gained if we would declare human reality to be completely homogenous with the organic or inorganic world? We would just have lost complexity and difference. And if we would do this on a purely epistemological or ontological level all legal norms protecting humans from objectifying and violent practices would seem completely arbitrary, just a matter of convention and bio-egotism that will not hold once science has elaborated its refutation of the human privilege.

Here we are at a point of antinomy: either we fall back to old-fashioned humanism and reinstate old dualism and dominance over nature, or we postulate an ontological continuity of humans and non-humans with an unspecific agency as basic instance that renders any ethical or legal concept of human agency null and void. In this last perspective social systems of law and ethics are ungrounded in any sound ontological concept and can only be understood as a human delusion that happens to be shared by many or all humans. One can imagine which devastating effects it must have on the psychological conditions of scientific work if scientists think in their professional mind that humans are more or less intelligent objects or agents like anything else, while in their civic identity they are forced to respect ethical and legal boundaries they see no rational foundation for in their work as scientists.

Thus I make the somewhat provocative claim that the by now wide-spread criticism of humanism,

speciesism and anthropocentrism is only seemingly a well-founded self-criticism of the Humanities while in fact it is already a mainstream ideology that serves the purpose of opening up new frontiers for biotechnological industries that in the long run point at the industrial production of humans.

Knowingly or not scholars of the cultural and social sciences who cultivate the discourse of post-trans- and anti-humanism serve the goals of an alliance of techno-science, large corporations and governmental agencies who seek to turn the human into a material that needs permanent treatment, adjustment and enhancement promising a win-win-situation for all parties, the optimized individual being more fit for competition, companies selling their product and the state administering a less problematic normalized population, while sacrificing not only the concepts but also the reality of human dignity, agency and subjectivity.

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Yet any attempt to counter this tendency with an appeal to old bourgeois ideals and concepts would only mean spilling waters on the mills of Transhumanism. I would therefore propose a new concept of a specifically human materiality that stands the test of scientific theory and practice and at the same time can serve as a protection of the ethical status of human agency.

The conditions of this move have to be found in the demonstration that human subjectivity, understood as an intense functional and affective phenomenon of immediate experience, is in itself the product, effect and symptom of a specifically human materiality.

### **Humans are thus understood as that kind of matter that subjects are made of.**

This does not make the classical metaphysical claim that humans are in fact and can only be the only biological species that can ever have the property of subjectivity. On the contrary, that very facticity and contingency of human subjectivity presupposes an ontological doctrine that sees traces and pre-cursors of subjectivity in non-human nature already.

To put it differently: if there would not be a diffuse climate of subjectivity in pre-human nature, if not in nature as a whole, there would also not be human subjectivity. A materialist view of subjectivity that does not rely on hypothetical soul or thought “things” reveals that subjectivity is always shared and is in itself the effect of the encounter with and projection of another subjectivity. This concept of subjectivity, both reflective and genetically materialist, is a perfect and complete refutation of the

isolated Cartesian cogito sure of itself, and instead sees subjectivity as a play of resonances that presupposes a process in which individual organisms learn subjectivity from others who do in principle not even need to be subjects themselves in the strictly humanist sense.

This socio-materialist approach to subjectivity obviously owes a lot to Butler, Foucault and Bourdieu but would also propose a hypothetical genealogical reconstruction of anthropogenesis in general with a hint to Batailles theory of the sacred. Thus by presupposing in a phantasmagorical sense that animals are somehow persons the human animal acquires human subjectivity in a paradoxical hysteron proteron. The point is not if animals are indeed in a reduced or radically heterogeneous sense persons – a point I would personally affirm – but the hypothesis that only by this paradoxical move we can reconstruct the emergence of human subjectivity without presupposing the very ego-thing as an already given human privilege that we wanted to explain. This theory could, when elaborated properly, put an end to the futile efforts of materialist reductionism. The narrative of reductionism always claims that there are illusions such as the illusion of consciousness, free will, the ego and such that need to be explained away in order to arrive at the pure material fact of what the human really is: a process of electro-chemical activities. Yet the fact that this is the material correlative of thought does not say anything about the existence or in-existence of thoughts. The counter-argument of parallelism or correlationalism is well-known.

I would therefore like to go one step further and point out that we could understand the very tendency of the human brain to wallow in illusions of itself being a thinking person is a specific characteristic of the very matter it is. There is no purely organic or physical or chemical matter that could be dissected underneath the subjective delusions of the human mind, but the brain or rather the body of the human is a machine producing thought and affect in the very same logic or causal necessity in which boiling water produces steam. Before being accused of vulgar materialism, a classical trope that would merit further investigation with it insinuating that there is subtle and noble materialism too, I am ready to admit that it is a lot more complicated than that.

Yet my point should be clear: We should not understand human matter, be it the artificially isolated epistemic matter of the brain or any other human part, product or function, as an organism, a biological organism that only seemingly thinks, dreams or believes that it is something else, but as a kind of matter in its own right that is ontologically defined in such a way that it has thought, dreams, faith, subjectivity as intrinsic properties.

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The reductionist will object that obviously that is an animal's body or brain on his dissecting table. He cannot find a human soul and he can also not find a human type of matter. This is so because he does not see the whole picture. To the scientist the only element he seeks to define as human or animal is the object he investigates -- this brain.

In my view the human matter is not a brain or an organism but the whole scene of the artificiality of the laboratory, the hybrid natural-cultural object of the brain and the scientist himself. This structure or assembly of a lab, a brain, a scientist and finally the results of the investigation forms one set of human materiality that cannot be reduced to any organic unit. Instead, the organic matter at hand, the human brain being questioned about its human or animal nature, is only an abstract part of this concrete materiality. The very scene of human materiality and subjectivity is always already larger than the abstract element of one organism.

The very act of taking an organism, isolating it from its environment and calling it an organism, an animal, is an entirely human move that puts human subjectivity outside of the organic world in which no isolated organism as such can be found. So the very proposition in which the scientist says that this brain is nothing but an animal's brain without any qualia or a human soul happens already in the framework of a specific human materiality. In the same sense the whole scene of the lab with the scientist questioning himself, the apparatus and the brain in this classic Faustian set-up of asking if there is a human soul or not is in itself a generic scene of human subjectivity as it always takes shape and transforms in particular material and intellectual scenes of encounter and investigation.

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To sum up: a new materialist approach to the human takes not the individual organism but the assembly or the machine as one basic techno-economic unit and as the basic element of human materiality -- a move that has already been proposed by ecology since Üxküll.

The material element the human inhabits is therefore not the organic body but culture or civilization in general. The material reality the human is both product of and subject to is neither the cogito nor this particular body, but a specific hybrid household or material-cultural ecology. A human individual can not live in the full scope of its very material nature if it has not, apart from the use of its own

body and brain, a relationship to other humans and the company of other natural and artificial things. Finally there will also be basic cognitive models, both externalized in media and internalized as psychic acts, no matter if images, sounds or concepts, that organize the energetic and symbolic metabolism inside that ecological machine. With this concept of concrete human materiality always already inhabited by a subjectivity that is spontaneously and instantaneously happening as both socially shared and individually differentiated I want to propose a way out of the trap of naturalism or idealism as two equally false and abstract forms of reductionism.

Neither an isolated thinking unit nor an isolated organic body could ever live up to the practical standards of actual human materiality.

With both these abstract positions being so obviously dysfunctional but still so omnipresent in the academia and scientific world one has to ask what material, and thereby I mean historical, social and political reasons may exist why a complex system such as humanity or human culture would insist on permanently producing false theories about itself?

Why does it insist on reducing its own reality to a caricature of utterly simplistic elements, why does it then fall into despair and why does it start to hate its own reality? Who would like to be an organic machine imagining a delusional consciousness? Or an isolated thinking thing never really sure if there is an outside world it could relate to?

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So the final question would be what reasons there are for false theories that do not only produce wrong representations of reality but turn the subjects holding them into neurotic agencies?

Here I would finally hint at the complex but, as I see it, still not fully elaborated term of habitus that Bourdieu derived from Aristotle and Mauss. I see myself in this line of thought, even though I also strongly support a profoundly ethical agenda of human liberty and dignity that I would never sacrifice to any scientific claim of making humans better by objectifying them.

I do not see a contradiction between the analysis of habitus as an objective conditioning of human behavior that includes not only external behavior but also habitual mental and affective states, and the defense of human subjectivity and its right to self-definition – because there simply is no contradiction.

The habitus is always already an expression of a person or agent aware of itself, its existence and its position in the world, otherwise it would not be a habitus but a physical mechanism or automatism.

On the other hand human subjectivity, even in its most solitary and intimate manifestations, is always already experienced and performed on the basis of a biographical history that has been marked by human materiality and thus habitus. If there is a culture of spirituality or inwardness it will have its habitus of specific body postures, social rituals and spacial set ups. And if there is a very physical habitus partly defined but strict rules and automatisms, such as sports, it will also have its own complex patterns of subjectivity. The refreshed debate of subjectivity vs. objectivity that has been reinserted into the debate around habitus by certain critical readers of Bourdieu is utterly flawed, as habitus, understood correctly, is the very concept and practical reality that transcends the alternative of subjectivity and objectivity. Habitus is in itself the very subjectivity of a social objectivity and the very material objectivity of a particular subjectivity. To argue that habitus is somewhat still too behaviorist, still too external, still too objectivist and therefore one should add, as if in a recipe, a bit more subjectivity, is absurd, for the external behavioral aspect that can be observed by an ethnologist is only the behavioral aspect of a habitus that is, as a full phenomenon of the one inhabiting and performing it, every bit as subjective and internal as it is external and behavioral.

The problem therefore is not the ontology of habitus but the epistemology of describing it. We are, at least in a certain sense, not fully telepathic. Therefore habitus is again not an abstract element or possession of one person fully knowing, seeing and owning itself inside out but a game between several players and observers.

There has been a lot of still not fully recognized work by Wittgenstein and his followers to point out that a person does not have a fuller grasp of her interior states than others do. Under many circumstances a person knows a lot better what the other feels or goes through than he knows of himself. The tendency to be delusional about one's own inner states and beliefs is one of the profoundest ethical and practical reasons why we must seek the company of others to stay healthy and sane. The idea that I am absolutely sure of my own feelings and thoughts, but always insecure about those of others is a delusion in its own right that keeps on causing a lot of psychological and ethical problems in all parts of the Western world.

In short: it needs at least two, probably more than two to read, appreciate, perform, develop, judge, improve, change any habitus, be it physical, intellectual, affective, social or other. Habitus is, as concept and reality, shared materialized and embodied subjectivity.

A lot has been said and written about the famous intersubjectivity of scientific results that guarantees their objectivity. If a fellow scientist confirms my findings I can be sure that I did not hallucinate.

Sociologically and historically speaking it is not that simple; in 1930ties Germany there would have been a lot of scientific peers consensually agreeing on a particular cranium displaying the properties of an inferior race. Evidence obviously follows cultural prejudice, probably not only in this particular case of a nationally shared Racist delusion. But there is still another problem: intersubjectivity tends to be a model of two disembodied brains or minds sharing the same opinion or perception by sheer telepathy. If intersubjectivity would be an inference by analogy, or a purely rational consensus of separate minds or a software program that miraculously runs on several brains synchronously it could not only not confirm scientific results, it could not even exist. At least not in this material universe. If intersubjectivity is happening, and indeed of profound importance for science, this is only so because subjectivity is intersubjectivity from the start. The miracle is not that I can, by analogy, infer that there is a mind like my own in that body over there, but that I could ever have the idea to attribute an isolated mind to myself, some lonely little homunculus that would be incarcerated in the inside of my cranium begging to get out and play with the other kids.

The common activities of investigating, questioning and confirming is a shared habitus of scientific materiality and subjectivity. It consists of many different acts, not of brute facts of complete consensus, and by all these nuances and differences enriches the very object it investigates. Thus the confirmation that two brains are sound and apt for science does not lie in the event of both of them seeing the exact same thing, which would indeed point to a shared hallucination, but in both of them articulating different but plausible views and interpretations of a thing that can only be real and therefore worthy of investigation if it has more than one aspect to it.

Lets come back to the prior question of the origin of false theories.

It is actually rather easy and intuitively evident to see intersubjectivity in science as a shared, but differentiated habitus. It seems to be also not too hard to see habitus in general as something that is indifferent to subjectivity or objectivity because it consists in both. If historically the concept of habits would have emerged before the famous split of subject and object, we would be used to asking why the split of object and subject can even arise, and not what could finally bind those two ontologically different elements together with all might.

We would also say that once we have established that difference for whatever functional reason of independence and distance from the world that very distance would create a specific habitus that does not ask for reunification as it has been chosen precisely in order to leave that unity behind.

So why the false theories? Because they are in themselves the result of a particular habitus that is not aware of itself, the habitus of the academic and the scientist in his peculiar isolation from the complex happenings in the social and material world of humans in general.

A person with a habitus is a person who makes certain investments in particular field-specific games that will create particular habits of thought, perception, communication and action in close interdependence.

A person in the streets going about his business will have no interest in reducing his own mental activities to epiphenomena of his brain. But a scientist who investigates into a pharmaceutical research promising of making people less aggressive with the help of a certain pill has every interest in the world to habitually think that there is no consciousness. By believing in a consciousness he would not gain anything in his field, by denying it he does not only win a better income, he even has to make that claim to be allowed into the peer group of his fellow researchers. Also an academic in the humanities will have the tendency to affirm a purely spiritual entity completely autonomous from any material element, a spiritual substance he tends to find embodied in books. The invention of the alphabet and the creation of particular institutions dedicated to its worship make it easy to acquire a habitus that believes in a pure intellectual substance that inhabits this mortal body like a spirit longing to return to its proper home.

All those habitual schools of thought petrify with the help of legal, economic and political institutions supporting their claim to knowledge, power and the leadership of discourse so that in the end an actually simple theory with a lot of empirical credit on its side comes in like a complete stranger. It

feels like the child in Andersen's beautiful fairytale who finally has the guts to shout: but don't you see, the King is naked!

We have a hard time understanding why generations of Chinese felt urged to cripple women's feet in order to worship them. From time to time we should take a step of methodological self-alienation and look at our most common and successful academic and scientific theories as if they were just a strange, compulsory cult to cripple the feet of human reality in the service of the peculiar tastes of particular groups whose interests might not always be the common good.

9

I want to close with a statement pro domo.

I see myself in the tradition of modern urban subjectivity as a socially and historically specific knowledge production. This diversity of heterogeneous productions, practices, methods, life forms and affective dispositions has been summarized under the social typology of the individual artist, a discourse I find extremely flawed. On the other hand I want to emphasize that contrary to decades of continental philosophy and critical studies of all sorts and kinds the academic field does in principle not allow for the proper cultivation of this kind of knowledge production.

We can see a large part of the cultural and intellectual history of modernity as a complex interplay of the academic institutions, the rather neurotic discourse of the genius artist and his or her hybrid claim to copyright and authorship and the innovative thrusts of modern subjectivity and production that often happen somewhere at the outskirts of official institutions and social typologies; so that once this innovation has been re-integrated into the institution the very idea or nature or habitus of the innovation has been lost to abstraction and reproduction. Whose guts do not cringe uncomfortably at the idea of a hip hop or performance course being taught at a state financed university does not understand the problem I am talking about.

The specific relevance of Bourdieu's brand of social theory does therefore not lie in the privilege of sociology as the new general ontology of modern Western academia, an ideology I would contest, even if Bourdieu himself was not immune to its seduction; but in the fact that Bourdieu was one of the first thinkers able to dissect the very problem of the academic habitus. Bourdieu prepared a meta-discourse uniting a theory of theoretical subjectivity with emphasis on the problems of ethnological model building, a critique of institutional habitus and a new empirical appreciation of

field-specific embodied intelligence as practical sense; and his meta-discourse provides us with the tools to understand what can be done in the academia and what not, no matter how good willed or leftist the academic might be inclined.

We have to be open to learn this hard lesson as we should be a little concerned by the fact that all the beautiful lessons we have learned about minority politics, queerness, alternative ethics and life styles, not to mention the countless subtle variations of reading differently since the 80ties and 90ties has left us utterly vulnerable to the fever curves of Capital and the rather stable constraints of normalized governmental state policy.

The subtle deconstructivist who finds himself unemployed and cut off from social capital has nothing in his hands to provide him with a new, sustainable communal lifestyle that could match his ethical and political convictions. All those theories, constructivist, deconstructivist or new materialist, are always in danger to create yet another purely academic career that implodes into nothingness once the academic world closes down to new employees.

Therefore I opt for a non-academic look at the material world of humanity. Matter or materiality should not be yet another fashionable concept pumping new blood into the dying apparatus of academia. The material world is precisely not another principle or theme to be talked about, but the very resistance to the order of discourse and propositional logic. When I sit in class, teaching or otherwise, Matter does not show up in the word "matter" that comes out of my mouth but in all those heavy and bored bodies who sit in front of me, bodies that have been taught the habitus of sitting still so that this body does not disturb pure thought.

To escape this absurdity I entered the dance field after finishing my ph.d., traveling back and forth between those fields, always unhappy with the restricted habitus on both sides, and of course always underpaid.

Today a successful participation in social capital flows, be it financial or otherwise, is intrinsically bound to the readiness of a subject to accept an extremely restricted code or style of conduct, to embody a fixed, recognizable, branded, specialized type standing for expert competence and credibility. This extreme pressure to specialize, even in body type and informal social skills, to be and embody the dynamic executive or the scientist or the athlete or the freak artist 24/7, is a foreplay to a biotechnological society that will decide for the special trajectory or a professional and

social biography before the birth of the individual.

In this perspective I opt for an activist new materialism and new humanism that stays close to the actual living bodies and asks about their inability, their unwillingness, their resistance, intelligence, humor, eroticism, poetics, cunning, empathy and practical sense to escape that trajectory towards a hyperefficient insect state.

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I would propose the term “inertia” as a concept and practice that might not only fuel more academic discourse but practically inform new life styles, but that will be another story.