

Rapallo – Hope in the Anthropocene (DC notes on 1. Analytical Schematic 2. DeLoughrey and 3. Colebrook)

Analytical Schematic

1. Since Krakow at the end of June, my thinking about Hope has changed a little. I'd always been worried about the lack of theorising of Hope itself in discussions of Hope and I'm now thinking that (for my purposes at least) Hope can be seen as an awareness that reality is not the appearance of reality 'for us'. I'm attempting to use Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* – to locate Hope as the outside of the modernist episteme (human reason) – for Kant the subject (as a conscious will or self) co-constitutes self and world through the idealist or subjective projection of space and time as a grid through which the world appears to be given in a meaningful way; beyond human construction, reality itself is ontologically unknowable. Kant's framing is subject-centred or idealist (and, of course, anthropocentric in focus) but this is the price of legibility, the artifice of a world that is not reality. After Kant this ontological limit was turned into an epistemological one of the known and unknown, with the human world held to expand with advances in knowledge. Nevertheless, it is Kant that sets up the divide between reason and reality. Hope is the speculative desire to go beyond the world of reason: the world of appearances, the world as 'given'. *Hope is the speculative outside of 'modernity': the world given to and by human reason.*

2. Following on from the above, my three stages or types of Hope are slightly different from the ones we discussed. The first outside is 'Critical Hope', which attempts to overcome the separations of the modern episteme, positing a processual world of 'becoming'. This is framed against the constraints of bureaucratic regimes of homogenisation, rationalisation and equivalence – seeking to make the world legible and thereby governable through reductionist and linear assumptions. Kant's view of the 'container' of time and space taken to the logical extreme where the subject's worlding of itself becomes the world, where the map is mistaken for the territory, theoretical abstraction for complex reality etc. The result of ignoring the outside of modernity is genocidal destruction. Life as a complex adaptive system, as a thermodynamic process of ordering against entropy, as a creative struggle of individuation, differentiation and complexification constitutes a radical excess to constituted power. *I would therefore think of Critical Hope as extending from the Frankfurt School through cybernetics up to indigenous approaches – all are relational, processual understandings, all are 'bottom-up' where life is self-generating.*

3. So far so good. We have re-run the Hope and Resilience discussion in Krakow – where resilience is seen as extending the desire to govern through inter-relation and drawing out the immanent powers of life as creative excess – extending outwards, letting the world in, (the exploratory or 'slow IR' of PB-P). 'Critical Hope' still has a lot of the cuts and separations of modernity – more precisely, there is still time and space – Hope still has goals (peace, sustainability etc) and Hope still has time *l'avenir/ to come*, i.e. it is futural. Hope is a critical and ethical practice which is doubly contingent – the subject or agent makes a choice to act in a relational context and the outcome is relationally contingent – because the subject is no longer separate but inserted into a world of processual becoming. *My point is that Critical Hope is no longer sustainable in the Anthropocene. It presumes a positivity and creativity to life (including the human) and assumes that the future will be better than the past. These cuts*

and separations enable Hope to become governmentalized and highlight that Critical Hope has failed to break with modernist assumptions of time and space.

4. Probably where I diverge further from our collective project (as initially conceived) is in thinking through the specific nature of Hope in the Anthropocene. I would start from the end of Critical Hope, more precisely its failure to construct an alternative (less modern, less subject-centred) future. The second type of Hope, the first in the Anthropocene, I'm calling 'Dark Becoming'. Dark Becoming sets itself up against Critical Hope, it sees the view of life as creative excess as too determinist, as too essentialising, as far too positive and self-assured, as far too amenable to governmentalizing discourses of resilience, cybernetics and neoliberal capacity-building. Dark Becoming covers a range of perspectives, all of which are sceptical of assumptions that removing modernist framings will unleash or enable solutions. Critical Hope is critiqued from two angles: firstly, that modernity can so easily be overcome, its effects or legacies continue; secondly, that the creative powers of life are somehow there 'for us'. In the Anthropocene, the binaries of Critical Hope are no longer so clear, there is no magic wand to switch from one perspective to another. Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing provide a nice way into this framing. Haraway advocates 'staying with the trouble', we are entangled in processes that mean that the 'outside' of the modernist episteme is a process of continual work, not of letting 'free' the immanent powers of life. Tsing argues that life processes are uneven or fragmented 'patchworks' interacting with each other and providing contingent opportunities in which creativity can occur (she recently stated that the problem with *The Mushroom at the End of the World* was that it was read as too 'hopeful'). There can be no promise, as Anna Tsing regularly notes, of a 'happy ending' (2015).

As Jairus Grove argues in *Savage Ecology* 'God is very dead, and so if you had hopes that the inner truth of the universe was going to be coincidental with the good, you are out of luck.' (2019: 16) Instead, we need an ethics of affirmation, which enables care and attentivity to miniscule openings and opportunities – the bifurcation points, contained in every moment of becoming - for engendering alternative futures (Grove, 2019: 231-2). Like Haraway and Tsing ethical practice is 'defined as the means to intervene in the vitality of becoming', 'not to steer its course [but] in hopes of going productively off course' (2019: 232). Following William Connolly, Grove argues: 'How we prepare ourselves for moments of bifurcation matter. Attunement or care for the world can alter the affective dispositions or primed response...' (2019: 233). We need to have 'belief in *this* world' (Deleuze cited in Grove, 2019: 238) without any faith or belief in guarantees in the modernist hubris that the world is there 'for us'. Affirming that 'the end of the world is not the end of everything' enables the political theorist as seer to 'look for incipient possibilities, not catastrophic certainties' (2019: 264). Deborah Bird Rose argues that processual becoming can be seen as 'life work' and as 'death work'. These approaches are much more nuanced understandings of the outside of modernity in the Anthropocene. Other work of Dark Becoming would include Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, where the Anthropocene reveals the legacies of modernity – colonialism, slavery, capitalist extraction – processual becoming is 'death work' as the Anthropocene reveals the excluded and oppressed (Adorno's 'Angel of History' becomes the key trope). Dark Becoming détournés Critical Hope problematising and, in some cases, inverting it.

5. The work on Dark Becoming brings Hope into the Anthropocene by clearing the ground. Essentially it does this through problematising immanence as an alternative to the transcendental idealism of Kant. There is no reality outside the 'modernist episteme' that can just be tapped into in order to have a 'second chance at a happy ending'. The Anthropocene reveals reality to us, not as a romantic world of harmonious becoming but as an unknowable or inaccessible world which is not our 'second home' but one in which we will always be troubled. However, this critique of Critical Hope still posits a practice of ethical intervention and still retains the legacies of space and time. Perhaps the key problem being that even assuming professional seers were able to 'embrace the uncanny' and orient themselves beyond anthropocentrism - with the necessary 'presumptive generosity', care and attunement - it seems hard to escape the feeling that providentialism is merely being smuggled in through the backdoor. For generous attunement to be ethical and engendering of differentiation and individuation then the world would still be 'there for us'. The world after the 'end of the world' would look very similar to the world that was apparently apocalyptically destroyed.

Dark Becomings of Tsing, Connolly, Haraway and Grove problematise Critical Hope but do not break from it entirely. Dark Hope completes the task. The Anthropocene removes the divide between 'modernity' and its 'outside': it brings the outside inside in removing the meaning-making framing of time and space. We are outside of modernity – we are in the world of Hope where reality lacks the cohering worlding of being 'given' or being 'for us'. Hope can no longer have a futural dimension. We cannot Hope for something to come for everything is here all the time. There is no world of becoming. Dark Hope is being in being without the Kantian cuts and separations which demarcated the subject from the world. To put it crudely, Critical Hope or Hope in modernity was thermodynamic, based on a process world of entangled becoming in life's struggle against entropy; Hope in the Anthropocene, Dark Hope is quantum: the world of superpositionality, without time and space. To live in Hope is to be aware that we are as much subjects as objects, as much past as future, the alternative possibilities and futures are infinite as we contain worlds, we are climate change, we are colonialism as much as we are anti-colonialism. Dark Hope is the reimagining of ourselves as indistinguishable from the world. Perhaps theorists to draw upon are Elizabeth Grosz, where we are nature; Stacey Alaimo's transcorporeality; Claire Colebrook and Karen Barad.

Post-Critical Hope discussion – Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene*

In modernity and in Critical Hope time is understood as linear, i.e. moving from the past through to the future. This linear nature of time as emanation from the centre draws upon an understanding initially religiously derived but given renewed coherence through modernist understandings of linear 'progress' and a developmentalist view of evolution – from the Big Bang to today as a process of growth and the attainment of ever higher and more complex stages of development with the Human and Western modernity as the apex. Whereas, in the past, futural thinking was essential to political engagement, it could be argued that, for critical thought in the Anthropocene, the radical gaze has been inverted. Rather than the hidden or inaccessible reality being a potential for alternative futures, this reality is seen as a key to reinterpreting and rewriting the past. Not only does this shift the focus from future to past it also reinterprets the appearances of the present as hiding not potential or virtual possibilities but rather as covering over the crimes and exclusions upon

which the appearances of the present are based. The present becomes an illusion of success and security rather than a repressive and coercive limit to human potential. This inversion of the temporality of critique and the assessment of the present makes Critical Hope impossible. This war on the assumptions of Critical Hope, I call above 'Dark Becoming'.

DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene* illustrates this shift very well, seeking to rewrite imaginaries of the past rather than to write imaginaries of the future. And, as is typical for this literature, draws upon Walter Benjamin's Angel of History as the figure of the Anthropocene (DeLoughrey, 2019). The Angel is flying backwards drawn towards the skies and can only see ruins piling up in front of his eyes. Benjamin becomes a key figure from the Frankfurt School seen as prescient today in the view that modernity needs to be rewritten from a telos of progress to one of hubris and destruction. Heading towards the future is imagined as a destructive and problematic aspiration. In holding that the Anthropocene illustrates the failure of modernity, both the modernist telos and the modernist understanding of a 'linear temporality' are called into question. As DeLoughrey writes: 'In recognizing the history, present, and future of apocalypse, universalized temporality becomes parochialized and characterized by ruptures and an experience of "now-time," a marked shift from chronology to simultaneity.' (2019: 134, 152)

'Now time' seeks to extend the past into the present, as the aim is to seek precisely the signs which reveal the potential of another, less productive, reality underneath or alongside the appearances of modernity. Thus, the signs that are often key for these critical theorists are the detritus of industrial modernity and colonialism, such as microplastics, radiation, pollution and chemical waste – whether appearing directly or indirectly through their mediation with non-human others, species negatively affected by climate impacts, for example (DeLoughrey 2019: 156). DeLoughrey provides a good example, building on Benjamin and cultural critic Jameson's use of allegory as analytic: 'The world system is a being of such enormous complexity that it can only be mapped and modelled indirectly, by way of a simpler object that stands as its allegorical interpretant.' (2019: 15)

For Critical Hope, reality has to hold the promise of a future that is different to the present. The *to-come* has to be signalled or signed to provide the purchase for ethical practice that engenders the future in the present. For Dark Becoming this process is either extremely speculative and fraught with agonising difficulty or these difficulties are evaded and the signs that are sought for are those that alert us to the destructiveness of the past rather than the Hope for the future. The signs of the Anthropocene are Darkening the present rather than Enlightening a future. This disjuncture is taken up by Timothy Morton in his work, particularly in *Dark Ecology*. For Morton, humanity is a hyperobject in that its effects can be seen, in the same way, climate change is also understood as a hyperobject, so large and all encompassing that it can only be registered indirectly by its effects. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues, building on Latour: 'the disconnect between humanity's own day-to-day mortal existence and apocalyptic ramifications of its activity makes it all the more difficult for the species – despite extensive rational analysis – to effectively realize its behavior' (2019: 15).

For theorists of Dark Becoming, like DeLoughrey, it is possible to work with an ontology of immanence and process in a 'world of becoming', yet the world to-come is one that necessarily reveals that the past (in terms of unseen or unheeded side-effects) is our future.

The future is the 'return of the repressed', destruction of literally Biblical consequences: a punishment and a coming to terms with Modernity, that is only too well deserved. In the Anthropocene the reality that appearances seek to hide is one of litany of crimes of destruction and decimation, of colonialism and extractivism, thus rewriting modernist progress as genocide and ecocide. It could be argued that this view of futural catastrophe is the inverse of Critical Hope and that the ethical practice is to enable this to be seen as justice rather than as some sort of accident or natural event.

Futural thinking is therefore problematic for Anthropocene thinkers, because this approach fails to open up the problematic of the human subject of futural thought and the hubristic enframing of time and space enabling the construction of a linear temporality. This is highlighted in the critical reception of the Extinction Rebellion climate change protest movement. It is often seen as a having a problem with 'whiteness'. This problem is often poorly articulated, for example as a naïve attitude towards policing and the call for high profile arrests to achieve publicity. In reality the problem with 'whiteness' is another way of saying that the protest movement has a problem with Critical Hope, because for Extinction Rebellion the crisis of climate change is a future threat. The retort is that the crisis is not a future one but a past and on-going problem of genocide and extinction, a problem that is intimately connected with settler-colonial, slave and racial histories of extraction and abuse. White folks do not just get the right to 'save the planet' now that they too feel the blow-back of centuries of white domination across the globe. Hope is for white folks. Dark Becoming enables Critical Hope to survive shorn of its positive belief in a telos of salvation and the idea that white people can romanticise the 'outside' of modernity as an Edenic idyll rather than a world of genocide and ecocide. *Allegories of the Anthropocene* seeks to close off the white saviour imaginary of Critical Hope. (This is the discussion that we touched on a number of times in the Hope and Resilience sessions in Krakow).

Post-Hope discussion – Claire Colebrook's *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life*

Whereas Critical Hope draws morality from a providential telos to be creatively enabled Dark Hope is the Hope of the present as always being in excess of its appearance. To be more precise, the present is the Kantian 'real' without the subject's cuts: reality shorn of appearances of 'being given'. The present becomes extended, given depth; in effect, sucking in space and time, which are no longer external as a 'container' for the meaning-making subject. Without space and time enabling the subject to cut appearance from reality everything exists at infinite scales within which we are entangled and appearances can have no fixed meaning. A world without appearances, a world not 'given' in appearance is a world without representation, things just are. What does this mean? Things are withdrawn but also things are infinite. Once things are no longer 'given' in time and space, we are without world but this is the end of the world of the Kantian subject not the end of all worlds.

Thus Dark Hope is Hope freed from its modernist construction as an 'outside'. This 'outside' was actually co-constitutive of the modernist episteme, the 'reality' that was a precondition for the subject to be at the centre of the world of meaning. Dark Hope is the outside to this outside. Dark Hope delivers on the promise of a reality without time and space. In *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* Colebrook sets up the problem of Critical Hope (and Dark Becoming) in its recouping of life as a creative power, and with this space and time, human centredness

and governability. Colebrook argues that the inaccessibility of life's excessive potential leads to thought beyond the ontological constraints of positive and productivist understandings of a 'redemptive' or 'knee-jerk' vitalism' so often underlying discourses of becoming (i.e. Resilience/Hope thinking) (2010: 48). It is too simplistic to imagine life as a force that flows through relational interaction, as 'an end that unfolds through time' (2010: 22), that seeks to draw out essences or enable entities to 'become themselves' or to orient themselves more productively to the world. The power of excess in the pragmatic framings of Resilience/Hope is always conveniently cast productively and functionally, where the power of life enables entities and systems to develop their own internal principles for mutually adaptive forms of self-maintenance or autopoiesis (2010: 34) – bouncing back to equilibrium or forwards to new forms of mutual sustainability. Life is thereby reduced to the on-going work of survival and adaptation. Thus, although the power of life may have no human-centred liberal telos of progress, in constructions of Resilience/Hope, life is always amenable to functional collaborations of mutual survival and sustainability. This is also reflected in much of contemporary social and political thought, for example, in Bruno Latour's imaginaries of collective assembly and negotiation to construct with non-human others who share our 'Earthbound' existence and the 'compositioning' and 'companion species' of Donna Haraway (Latour 2018; Haraway 2016; Clark 2011: 36-40; Neyrat 2019: 90-104).

In tracing a line of thought of a less productivist and activist framework of the power of life, life is not imagined as continually working to become its 'better self' through the imaginary of the 'hidden hand' of Hope/Resilience. For Colebrook, these imaginaries set 'the urgent, yet redemptive, tone today of ecological ethics', and constitute Critical Hope as part of the problem rather than the solution as: 'it is the insistence on the universe as an organism or web of life that allows us to retain anthropomorphism, for the world is still the milieu of our life *and* life itself is presented as active, creative and self-furthering' (2010: 57, italics in original). She argues that we need to reject this view of life as made up of systems of harmonious self-making interactive subjects and instead to appreciate that to live is also to become subject to powers beyond knowledge and control (2010: 133). It is precisely these breaks in continuity that prevent life being one homogenising process of 'becoming' or 'actualisation' and enable creativity beyond the imaginaries of critical immanence. While immanent alternatives challenge modernist assumptions of human-centered direction over life, anthropocentrism is smuggled back in with an ontology of a world that is coherent and harmonious and capable of directing governance towards new forms of sustainability.

Dark Hope approaches tend to stress that life lacks an immanent direction towards order or functional individuation and differentiation. What appears as a telos, particularly in reductionist forms of modernist thought, is merely a product of contingent interactivity: life may have infinite forms of hidden potential but that does not mean that it is equipped with an underlying 'purpose' or 'reason' or a vitalist force that can be tapped into and directed. To think so would be merely to reproduce (in a slightly more mediated way) discredited assumptions of linear causality, recapturing imaginaries of 'progress' and 'development' for new (seemingly less modernist) forms of governmentality. For Timothy Morton, for example, the Anthropocene reveals a 'Dark Ecology' at work, where the potential excess of life over being is all too real but ultimately, ontologically, inaccessible to us. Rather than readable and adjustable feedback loops, so essential to discourses of resilience and adaptation, there is a fundamental, irreducible, gap between effects or appearances and things or entities

themselves (2016: 93). For Dark Hope, the fact that life is in excess of being poses fundamental questions to resilience discourses that seek to use or instrumentalise life as a resource. Resilience approaches seem just as hubristic and blind to unintended consequences as those of the modernist framings they seek to go beyond.

Key to Dark Hope is the erasure of both sides of the co-constituted Kantian world, the self as subject and the world or environment as object, this world as constituted by the subject's construction of space and time. Key influences in this area are some readings of Deleuze and object-oriented approaches which posit a 'flat ontology' where all entities (objects-subjects) are internally divided between their virtual being (or essence) and their affects, manifestations or appearances which are always necessarily relational. It is this internal division, which enables each entity to have individual agency and the capacity to change internally through its affordances to other entities. Each entity or 'self' is thereby imbricated within an outside all the way down. For Colebrook, the problem with Critical Hope is that it has sought to recuperate the human as meaning-making in the Anthropocene, in seeing the world as there 'for us' as interpretable through its vitality and drive as a negentropic living system: 'The image of the earth as a living system is a restriction of scale to the narrative that accounts for life, but this same earth might also be viewed from no scale at all, without the immanence of life operating as a frame.' (2016: 112) Rather than take up the critical challenge of DeLoughrey's 'allegories of the Anthropocene', for Colebrook the task is the opposite, precisely because the Anthropocene removes the ground of the stable subject, making allegorical thinking impossible or delusional (2016: 117). Thus, 'if there is *nothing* to legitimate the transition from inscription to sense, then politics is not so much about expansion—explain the text by way of its being an epiphenomenon of a grander or global whole—but about collapse' (2016: 116). 'Rather than passing seamlessly from what is presented to the proliferation of what it signifies, we perceive the presented and think critically about it not being that which it signifies.' (2016: 124)

...to approach what has been offered as the Anthropocene in terms of sublime materiality, would be to read geological inscription as it is, and not as some promise or sign of what humanity must do, or what humanity must have been. If politics has become the promise and necessity of another world for us, I would suggest that what the Anthropocene promises is an impolitic erasure or deadening of those matters, inscriptions, figures and substitutions that seem to stand for a world to come. (2016: 106)

Critical work in the Anthropocene would appear to return to transcendental idealism, in that the work is to be done in the inside of the human subject, in contemplating the world differently and less hubristically. Hope was born with Kant's invention of a reasoning subject and it reaches its dark culmination with the recognition that reasoning no longer needs to detach us from being in the world.