

‡ FOR AN APOCALYPTIC PEDAGOGY

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Today, perhaps more than ever, the possibility of apocalypse is the most urgent horizon of thought. While the destruction of the planet and the end of humanity as a result of divine intervention have always been thinkable, these scenarios always seemed to belong to the realm of fantasy. What distinguishes our age is that apocalypse, or the utter destruction of the planet now belongs to the realm of real possibility. The possibility of apocalypse has entered the realm of immanence, of the earth, rather than existing as a transcendent possibility issuing from the divine. The rise of global capitalism, with its ruthless exploitation of the environment and its imperative to actualise all possible sources of profit, coupled with its unquenchable demand for energy in the form of fossil fuels to drive its engines of production and trade, has ushered in the age of the anthropocene—perhaps better called the “nomismacene,”¹ to capture the sense in which it is capital that has wrought this transformation—which is quickly transforming the entire climate and environment of the planet. With the ever-growing intensification of capitalism, the population expands as a result of the fecundity of agriculture and unparalleled technologies of distribution and transport, creating an even greater demand for energy, food, and materials for building that, in turn, exacerbate the assault on the environment. Moreover, the dwindling of energy resources, and famine produced by changing climate conditions and an increasing frequency of natural disasters, leads to growing political instability and more frequent instances of war. Meanwhile, a society of the spectacle wrought by new communications technologies functions—despite bringing the entire world into our living rooms and computers—to veil these circumstances through a variety of strategies ranging from the construction of an age of distraction, whether through the ever-changing news *du jour*, the endless interruption of text messages and emails, or celebrity spectacles, to the outright obfuscation

1 From the Greek νομισμα or *nomisma*, meaning “money” or “currency.”

of the reality of climate change and its link to global capitalism. As a consequence, the two things that are most determinative of our material circumstances today—climate change and capitalism—are rendered invisible even, paradoxically, as we chatter about them endlessly. With these intertwined phenomena we face nothing less than the possibility of a global apocalypse, whether as a result of the collapse of civilization as we know it, due to the destruction of the environment and the exhaustion of the energy required to motor our social assemblages, or in the form of an extinction of humanity and a ruin of the planet.

Where apocalypse is the contemporary horizon of thought, the task becomes one of thinking—to risk a Heideggerian turn of phrase—the material reality of dwelling, for what is needed is a subjectivity attentive to how we are situated in the ecology of the world. The thought of dwelling, in its turn, is an ontological thinking. And with this ontological thinking we must conceive of a pedagogy, a practice that would cultivate forms of subjectivity attentive to the veiled being of dwelling. This thesis might initially seem absurd, for ontology, which investigates being *qua* being, is generally thought as the most abstract of investigations, whereas all of these problems are deeply concrete. However, how we relate to and discern being is a component in all of these problems, and also our ability to respond to these problems. What we do, how we live, and how we respond to problems—and whether or not we even discern them—is wrapped up in how we understand being. In short, ontology matters.

Here, then, we must distinguish between ontology and being. Being is what *is* regardless of whether or not anyone bothers to think about it. *An* ontology is a theory *of* being that may or may not grasp what is. In this respect, one component of our problem today lies in how we think being in our everyday relating to the world around us. An apocalyptic pedagogy—and here it should be noted that *αποκαλυψις* signifies both the utter destruction of the world and an unveiling—contests the spontaneous ontology of everyday life (OEL) that veils what it is to dwell, instead unveiling a networked conception of being populated by precarious and fragile relations. Such a subjectivity requires overcoming the OEL based on a sort of fetishism—which Marx gave us the basic schema to decipher—where the beings that compose being are thought of as discrete and divorced from the dynamic relational networks or ecologies that sustain them.

How might a pedagogy directed at ontology contribute to mitigating global apocalypse? Perhaps, paradoxically, by practicing apocalypse. This practice of apocalypse would be a practice not of utter destruction—though perhaps the destruction of the reigning OEL—but of unveiling. I will have more to say about this later, but for the moment we should investigate just what a pedagogy is. Elsewhere I have proposed that we conceive of all being as composed of machines, nothing but machines.² Whether it is the smallest particles (or strings) of which matter is composed, or trees, automobiles, theories, persons, institutions, novels, or galactic clusters—and all other things besides—to be is to be a machine. This, of course, is a metaphor; but, then, metaphors are machines as well. If the reader finds the term “machine” distasteful, “thing,” “object,” “system,” “being,” “entity,” “actant,” “process,” “substance,” or “event” are synonyms. While I cannot discuss all of the details of what constitutes a machine here, what is important is not the signifier we use to denote entities, but that we think beings not in terms of their properties, qualities, or features, but rather in terms of what they *do*. Machines operate. They are activities that draw on flows—and flows are themselves machines—transforming them through their operations. Machinic ontology is therefore a process ontology.

If the signifier “machine” is preferable to signifiers such as “object,”³ “thing,” or “substance,” then this is for two reasons: First, the term “object” seems to ineluctably lead us to think of a subject. Objects are thought as what subjects posit. We are thus led to think that there are two domains of being—that of subjects and that of objects—and we are drawn into questions of epistemology or of how a subject is able to know objects. Where we began with questions pertaining to the being of beings, we end up with questions of how we know beings. While these questions are deeply important, questions of what beings are are also important. My hope is that the term “machine” is removed enough from the grammar structuring terms like “object” and “subject” to allow us to temporarily bracket questions of

2 Levi R. Bryant, *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), chap. 2.

3 In *The Democracy of Objects* I proposed that we conceive all of being as composed of objects. However, there I argued that “object,” when properly analyzed, denotes “machine,” “system,” or “process.” Cf. Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011), chap. 5.

epistemology so as to tarry with the things themselves. And, of course, it goes without saying that subjects and knowledge-producing practices and theories are themselves types of machines.

Second, while there are clear disadvantages to the term machine,⁴ it at least has the merit of drawing our attention to what things do. In particular, the idea of a machine draws our attention to questions of how things operate, what they operate upon, what they produce in operating, and what energy they draw upon to operate. There is no machine, not even thought, that is not thermodynamic. Even thought requires calories. Compare how the question “what is it?” is answered in traditional substance-ontology and machinic-ontology in the case of trees. In the substance-ontology presupposed by 18th-century botany, the emphasis was on the identification and determination of those features that allow us to categorize and distinguish different plants. The botanist might discuss the shape of leaves, different types of leaves, features of bark, their colours, and so on. This ontology sought to capture trees in a series of distinctive features revolving around qualities. This method, of course, is important and should not be dismissed outright. Machinic-ontology, however, approaches trees not in terms of their properties, but in terms of their operations, what those operations draw on to operate, and what those operations produce. Trees are factories that draw on flows of sunlight, carbon dioxide, water, and soil nutrients, producing various types of cells organized in specific ways that generate leaves, bark, trunks, roots, and oxygen as outputs. It is not that properties like the shape of leaves are unreal, but rather that they are the result of these operations. Moreover, as Thomas Rickert would argue, drawing on the French concept of *terroir*, what the tree will “become” is not a predestined outcome of a genetic blueprint, but is in part a function of the *terre*, the land, in which the tree grows and from which it draws the flows upon which it operates.⁵ Genetically identical seeds grown in different geographical soils will produce trees with different qualities. As Deleuze puts it, “we are made of

4 In particular, the term “machine” has the disadvantage of carrying connotations of technologies created by human beings for the sake of purposes. Clearly the philosophical usage of the term “machine” proposed here requires us to suspend these connotations, for not all machines are created by human beings and not all machines have a purpose.

5 Thomas Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), ix.

contracted water, earth, light and air.”⁶ This is why *where* grapes are grown makes such a profound difference in the qualities of a wine. Insofar as there is a singularity to these circumstances in each instance, each machine will also possess a singularity citing, as it were, the field from which it grew. The individual will precede the general, such that the general, resemblance, is a statistical effect of similar conditions of genesis rather than something already encoded in the machine that becomes.

From the foregoing, then, it follows that a pedagogy is a machine as well. If pedagogy must be referred to with the indefinite article, then this is because there is not one pedagogical technology, but a variety of different pedagogical technologies that produce very different things. Nonetheless, there are some commonalities among these different pedagogies. If we resolve to entertain the hypothesis of treating pedagogy as a machine, we should ask not what a pedagogy *is*, but rather what a pedagogy *does*. The first dimension of pedagogy consists of the question of what a teaching operates upon. To this, the obvious answer is students and apprentices. However, above all, it operates on bodies, affects, and forms of cognition. Students and apprentices are the flows that pass through a pedagogical machine, operating on body-minds. The second dimension of pedagogical machines revolves around how these machines operate. This is the question of pedagogical techniques, which, despite being a crucial site of critical investigation for radical pedagogy, I will not discuss in detail here.⁷

6 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 73.

7 In his famous essay, “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus,” Althusser argues that education is one of the central components of the state apparatus through which the conditions of production are reproduced, cf. Louis Althusser, “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001). Elsewhere, Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière develop similar claims, cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), chap. 2 and Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Both Freire and Rancière contend that there is a certain form of pedagogy that constructs a subjectivity obedient to authority and structured along certain class lines, while simultaneously divesting these subjects of their ability to pose their own problems and develop their own knowledge. A radical pedagogy, would, in part, contest and undermine the mechanisms of this form of pedagogy, opening the way to the formation of genuine agents.

Here I will focus on the third dimension of pedagogical machines: what such machines produce. Initially the answer seems obvious. Pedagogical machines operate by transmitting knowledge, thereby producing knowing subjects. This, of course, raises all sorts of questions as to just what knowledge is. The Greeks distinguished at least five forms of knowledge—δοξα (*doxa*, opinion), επιστημη (*episteme*, propositional knowledge with justification), φρονησις (*phronesis*, practical knowledge), τεχνη (*techné*, craftsmanship), and σοφια (*sophia*, wisdom)—one of which, *doxa*, does not even deserve to be called education. When we look at primary school education, with its focus on standardised testing, it is not clear that any of the remaining four forms of knowledge are transmitted by pedagogical machines. While we might think that primary schools transmit *episteme* because this form of knowledge is transmissible by speech—*phronesis* and *techné*, while clearly having components of speech and writing, are primarily learned by doing—much of the primary school curriculum lacks any component of justification or supporting reasons for the propositions transmitted, rendering such propositions better classified as *doxa*.⁸ When reflecting on primary school education in the United States, as well as the premises behind educational reforms such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core, it will be noted that there seems to be an obsession with propositional knowledge as evinced in a discourse focused on “facts”; yet it seems that learning is something far more profound than a transmission and internalisation of propositions.

While knowledge, in one or more of its four forms, is certainly a core component of learning, it is not clear that it constitutes what is most characteristic of pedagogy and learning. Might not conceiving of pedagogy as a machine of subjectivization be both more accurate and get us further? The concept of subjectivization often carries negative connotations, evoking images of indoctrination. While there are indeed machines of subjectivization that function in this way, the function of indoctrination should not be understood as intrinsic to these technologies. Rather, peda-

⁸ Here it should be borne in mind that *doxa* is not synonymous with falsehood, but rather a belief that one holds without knowing why it is true or without being able to provide a demonstration for its proof. I am of the opinion (*doxa*) that there are stars that are 100,000 light years from Earth, and might even be able to name some of these stars, but because I lack detailed knowledge of astronomy, I am unable to provide a demonstration that this is indeed the case.

gogies as machines of subjectivization should be thought of as technologies that produce agents with certain cognitive, affective, and normative capacities that can be either emancipatory or oppressive. When pedagogy is at its best, it engenders, at the cognitive level, not merely the internalization of propositions passively received from a master, but rather the capacity to form propositions or sequences of thought, as in the case of the agent that has undergone subjectivization as a scientist developing the capacity to formulate experiments and theories explaining phenomena. At the affective level, subjectivisation produces capacities to act and sense the world.⁹ The subjectivization a doctor undergoes in becoming a doctor engenders a capacity to sense certain signs of the body as significant or signifying with respect to various medical conditions and diseases, while the training of an athlete produces bodily capacities to act in particular ways in response to aleatory local situations, such as those powers of the surfer in response to waves. At the normative level, subjectivization produces values and goals proper to a form of activity, social existence, and life. A pedagogy is not merely the transmission and internalization of propositions, but rather the formation of a body at the spiritual and affective level. At the cognitive and affective level, it is clear that pedagogy as a machine of subjectivization consists of the production of the capacity to sense signs relevant to a domain of being and to act appropriately in response to those signs.

Earlier I suggested that an apocalyptic pedagogy operates with the possibility of collapse and utter destruction as the horizon of its operations, but also with unveiling as its mode of operation. In particular, such an unveiling is an unveiling of being as dwelling. An apocalyptic pedagogy would be one that aims at subjectivizations cognitively and affectively attuned to the unveiling of beings or machines, including ourselves, as they dwell. This raises three interrelated questions: first, what is the veiled world in its

9 Here I follow Deleuze's reading of affect in Spinoza. In this context, affect refers not primarily to emotion, but rather to a body's capacity to affect and be affected. Being affected refers to passions and more broadly the body's capacity to both sense the world and be acted upon by other bodies in the world. For example, sharks are able to sense other organisms through the electro-magnetic fields that they emit. By contrast, the capacity to affect refers to actions or what a body is capable of doing as in the case of a bird's capacity to fly. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 27. All machines, I contend, can be understood in terms of their affects.

veiledness? Put less cryptically, in what way does the world present itself to us in veiled form? Second, what is the activity of unveiling, and the mode of cognition and affectivity proper to unveiling? Third, what does it mean for a being to dwell? As we will see, unveiling is the practice of bringing the background or what Rickert calls the “ambient” into the foreground. As Rickert describes it, ambience “encompasses various shades of meaning, but largely [...] refers to what is lying around, surrounding, encompassing, or environing.”¹⁰ The ambient is a field of interrelated machines, all operating with respect to one another, affecting how the others operate, depending on others for their operations, drawing on flows from other machines, and issuing flows to other machines. The ambient is not the machine—or perhaps it is a hypercomplex machine?—but is rather that field into which a machine plugs in exercising its operations.

The ambient is thus the ecological; it is an ecology of machines. Here we must exercise caution, for the term “ecology” evokes connotations of “nature.” We think of the ecological as something we investigate elsewhere, outside of society, culture, or the city. Ecology is what we investigate when we investigate Amazonian rainforests and coral reefs. This is a connotation that should be abandoned by apocalyptic ontology. “Ecology” does not signify nature but relation, relations between machines. There is an ecology of urban neighbourhoods in New York, no less than Canadian forests. This ecology, this ambience, does not consist of weeds growing in sidewalks, rats, cockroaches, mould and pollen—though it includes these too—but rather of roads, businesses, relations between different groups, institutions such as schools, different sets of customs belonging to those various groups, sources of energy and food, technologies that afford and constrain action, affiliations such as friendships, conflicts among different groups, police and the local customs of police forces, laws, governmental agencies, and many other things besides. There is an ecology of everything, including a household, not because everything draws on the natural world as the background upon which it is dependent—though everything does—but because everything exists in fields of relations that condition how machines behave. It is for this reason that ecological thinking is ontological thinking. Thinking ecologically means thinking the mediation of machines, how machines are related to other machines, and how these mediations condition how machines behave.

¹⁰ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 5.

There are two dimensions to the OEL through which its mechanisms of veiling function: the erasure or veiling of ambience and the freezing of beings in the actuality they display under certain ecological conditions. With respect to the first, Marx, I believe, provides the basic schema for comprehending the veiled world and how the veiled world presents itself. When developing his account of commodity fetishism, Marx famously remarks that the commodity “is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes [...] for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.”¹¹ Here Marx is somewhat misleading, for it is not so much that when in a state of commodity fetishism one treats relations between people as relations between things, but rather that relations to other people are treated merely as relations between things. In our dealings with commodities that we purchase and consume, we experience ourselves as merely dealing with things, with objects, overlooking the ambience of social relations, the background, the ecology of societal relations that renders these commodities possible. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, paraphrasing Marx, “we cannot tell from the mere taste of wheat who grew it; the product gives us no hint as to the system and the relations of production.”¹² When I purchase a cheap pair of shoes from Wal-Mart, I take myself to *just* be buying shoes and to be dealing with no other people at all, save the superstore and the cashier. However, these shoes are cheap, they have the exchange-value they have, as a result of being produced in Third World sweatshops that minimize the cost of production. In purchasing these shoes I take myself to *merely* be participating in the mundane activity of purchasing shoes. In fact, I am participating in an entire system or ecology of social relations with other people, which functions to reproduce these relations. Yet all of this is ambient in the shoes. In his analysis of what is ambient in the commodity (i.e., of social relations), Marx reveals himself as a profoundly ecological thinker.

The unveiling practiced in apocalyptic ontology moves beyond the self-enclosed boundaries of the discrete or individual machine, unfold-

11 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. I*, trans. Ben Fowkes, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 165.

12 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 24.

ing how it is plugged into an entire field of other machines. Where OEL sees joblessness, for example, as the result of a moral failing of an *individual*—“the jobless person is lazy and lacks a good work ethic and therefore deserves her joblessness”—apocalyptic ontology reveals how states of machines are conditioned by the ecology of relations in which they *occur*. The unveiling practiced by apocalyptic ontology in the case of joblessness would look at the availability of jobs in a geographical region, how racism might function with respect to jobs, how foreign trade agreements might affect the availability of jobs, the impact of new technologies on jobs, etc. In this regard, apocalyptic ontology treats *states* of machines in a manner akin to how psychoanalysis treats symptoms. In psychoanalysis, symptoms have a meaning, a signification, relating to their life history. The woman’s phobia of weasels might not simply be an irrational fear of weasels, but rather might refer to an internalized *discourse* that arose as a young girl when her parents were going through a particularly nasty divorce. Perhaps her mother constantly referred to her father as a “deceitful weasel.” Her phobia would be a trace of this discourse and trauma, a way of managing that trauma and the anxiety that accompanies it in the phobia of a particular animal. Where Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, based on the OEL, might seek to overcome this phobia through gradual exposure to weasels rendering them tolerable—thereby leaving the ambience of the symptom, the family history, intact—the unveiling practiced in psychoanalysis would seek to decipher the ambience, the meaning, of this signifier so that the patient might directly confront that trauma. The case is similar with all states of machines. There is a background field that conditions or contributes to the states of the machine.

None of this is to suggest that machines have no agency of their own. Every machine has its “Eigenvalues” or powers that reside within the being itself and that are activities on the part of the machine itself, and not simply outputs in response to how the machine has been affected by other machines. Some machines are unable to initiate actualisations or actions on their own, such that their states are actualised only in response to flows from other machines. For example, the states of malleability and brittleness characteristic of iron are a function of the temperature of the field the iron occupies at a particular point in time. Other entities have agency—and this agency exists in degrees ranging from that of very simple organisms

like bacteria up to more complex machines such as dogs, dolphins, and humans—and therefore have a degree of freedom in their action consisting of the capacity to actualise states out of themselves. Yet because they exist in a field composed of other machines, many of the actions open to them constitute either poor or foreclosed possibilities. By analogy, a knight in a game of chess might have the power to move in a particular way but be unable to do so because another piece is occupying that space or the player might choose not to do so because it would be immediately taken in the next move.

There are degrees of freedom for genuine agents, yet that freedom can be constrained by how the field, the ecology, in which the agent dwells is arranged. In the case of joblessness it is not unusual to hear people blame the jobless themselves, saying that they should just move somewhere else where there are jobs. This misses the point that either, first, the agent might exist in a way that does not afford him the possibility of moving, e.g., he lacks the financial resources; or, second, moving would not be a “good move” because it would sever him from relations that make his life worth living, such as relationships with friends and family, or because he has obligations that prevent him from moving, as in the case of care for elderly parents. OEL has a perpetual tendency to erase ambient fields that characterize the terrain in which agents dwell. As a consequence, we get two very different ways of responding to symptoms. In the case of OEL, we get a *moral* discourse that calls for the spiritual transformation of agents, such as teaching them a “good work ethic” in the case of joblessness. In the case of ecological ontology, it is the ambient field, the background of action, that is largely the source of the problem. It is consequently this field that needs to be engaged with.

The foregoing allows us to give the OEL that apocalyptic pedagogy targets—i.e., to give the veiled world greater clarity. The veiled world of the OEL is one that erases the ambience of entities or how they dwell in fields of relations to other entities. Entities, machines—including persons themselves—are encountered as unrelated to one another, without ambience, without dwelling, such that they are not implicated or sheathed within one another. They are treated as discrete and autonomous, as separable units. As a consequence, we experience ourselves as beings who do not dwell, who are not sheathed in other beings, and encounter other beings as discrete and independent such that they don’t affect one another. Thus, as

Jane Bennett suggests, we experience things as capable of just being thrown away.¹³ For the OEL, when things are thrown away they are gone, they are without effect, for things are without ambience or relationality. The car burns the gasoline without remainder. It does not emit gases that, in turn, affect the ambient field in their own way. And perhaps this is another way of thinking the subjectivization aimed at by apocalyptic pedagogy: such a pedagogy aims, in part, at producing a form of affectivity and cognition that is attentive to waste as waste. It is thermodynamic. “Waste as waste” does not refer to that which goes unused—yet another trope of OEL insofar as it seeks to maximally exploit everything—but rather to that which remains after the operation, an output of a machine on the flows upon which it acts. In a manner befitting of Pynchon, apocalyptic subjectivity, in part, is attuned to the agency of waste.

However here we must exercise caution, for the great temptation that haunts the unveiling of apocalyptic practice lies in the thesis that things *are* their relations, that they are only in and through their relations. Apocalyptic ontology has a tendency to overcompensate in the face of the discrete ontology of OEL, treating relations as intrinsic to machines. Yet if relations were intrinsic to machines, there would be no danger of apocalypse. While non-relation might indeed spell the death or destruction of a thing, machines nonetheless enjoy a minimal autonomy or independence from their relations. As William Connolly has argued, there is a fragility of things, a vulnerability.¹⁴ This vulnerability lies not only in the capacity of things to be affected by other things such that they are destroyed—as in the case of coral reefs dying as a result of rising ocean temperatures—but also as a result of relations being severed. Things suffer both as a result of relations and as a result of non-relation. The entire project of apocalyptic ontology and ecology is for naught if we do not begin from the premise that both relations and non-relations can be destructive, and if we fail to understand that the relations constitutive of dwelling are fragile such that they are capable of being severed.

The second great veiling constitutive of OEL lies in “actualism.” Actualism consists of the reduction of machines to their occurrent prop-

13 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press), 6.

14 William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

erties under specific conditions. This veiling is more difficult to grasp, as actualism is so pervasive in our thought. We have a tendency to treat qualities of entities as intrinsic features that belong to the machine in all possible contexts, rather than events that occur under specific circumstances. Take a beautiful piece of blown glass artwork such as a vase. We say that the vase *is* blue. Yet in reality, the vase is only this particular shade of brilliant blue under particular lighting conditions such as those of a bright sunny day. In other lighting conditions, the vase might be green or a darker shade of blue, while in dim light it might be black or grey. It will be noted that in each instance of colour in the preceding, I used the verb “to be,” rather than variants of the verb “to appear.” This is because the colour of the vase is not merely an “appearance,” but is a real event characterising the being of the vase. The color of the vase arises from an interplay of the molecular structure of the vase and the wavelengths of light the vase interacts with. The vase really is grey in dim light. It is not that the vase “really” is bright blue and this blueness is just veiled. This is because the colour of the vase is a result of powers or capacities possessed by this machine. The vase-machine draws on flows of light to produce particular qualities of colour as events within a field of ambience.

Actualism has a significant impact on how we relate to machines, because it leads us to believe machines have the same properties or qualities in all possible contexts or ambient fields. For example, we are led to think a machine, like a particular pesticide, will behave in the same way in the field as it does in the controlled environment of the laboratory. Or take the case of the problem student in primary school. She does poorly in her schoolwork, gets in fights with other students, is difficult with her teachers, etc. Actualism leads us to think this student just *is* a “bad apple” in need of severe discipline. We treat these problem behaviours as intrinsic qualities of the student and act accordingly. Apocalyptic subjectivity, premised as it is on ecological ontology, would by contrast attend to the ambience within which the student dwells, treating this behaviour as a symptom of that ecology. Perhaps there are problems at home. Perhaps the student lives in precarious economic circumstances. Perhaps she is being bullied by other students at the school. Revealing such relations, disclosing such an ecology, would not only lead us to abandon the notion that these problems mentioned are intrinsic features of the student, but would transform how we respond to the student, focusing on this ambience as a way of helping

the student.

An apocalyptic pedagogy would attend to the production of subjectivizations both that call into question the discrete ontology and actualism of OEL, and that foster cognition and affectivity proper to ecological thinking. Such a pedagogy would foster student awareness not only of ecological relations with respect to things at the natural, social, and economic levels, but also with respect to their own existence and actions. Students would develop a subjectivity cognizant of how their very existence is dependent on an entire ecology of natural, cultural, and economic relations, and also of how their actions and modes of consumption affect this ecology. Rather than seeing themselves as discrete individuals outside of this ecology, they would instead see themselves as embedded within it.

By way of conclusion, we here might think of the Bloemhof primary school in Rotterdam, Holland. Beginning with an ecological conception of being, this school for young students that are largely disadvantaged children of immigrants seeks to both foster an ecological subjectivity and to directly intervene in the social and cultural ecologies of these students. Thus, for example, students have a vegetable garden that they tend and that produces food used in the cafeteria meals. Waste from the preparation of those meals is, in its turn, used to create compost to fertilize the gardens. The students begin to learn about where food comes from and how much care it takes to produce it. The part of the city where the school is housed is subject to a lot of crime and gang activity. Students and families are involved in cleaning up the neighbourhood and creating parks. This leads to the formation of stronger community relations where greater pride is taken in the neighbourhood, which plays some role in decreasing crime in the neighbourhood. The construction of a different ecology takes place here. Where neighbourhood maintenance conducted entirely by the city disinvests people from the neighbourhood, leading them to think of it as something that is just there, maintenance and building conducted by those that live there invests them in this area and fosters productive social relations. Those that vandalise these parks and streets are no longer just vandalizing “the city,” but the dwelling of their neighbours, friends, and family members.

Often one of the problems immigrant populations face in these neighbourhoods is linguistic isolation from the broader culture. Towards this end, parents are encouraged to engage in these building projects and

in the daily activity of producing lunch for the children at the school. Generally, student linguistic competence in Dutch is greater than that of the parents. Through this participation at the school, and the maintenance and building projects, relations are forged between parents from different cultural backgrounds and opportunities are given to develop their language skills that they might not otherwise have. Not only does this enhance the strength of the community, but it also increases their power of acting and living within the context of Holland.

Bloemhof also practices a pedagogy that engages students at the level of affectivity. Part of the curriculum consists of co-ed martial arts for the boys and girls. This affective component of the education serves a variety of functions. First, it helps to cultivate bodily competence and development. It also helps to develop enhanced cognitive function. Additionally, it gives students some ability to defend themselves, thereby increasing their confidence. However, something remarkable also happens at the level of gender relations. At this young age, the girls are generally more coordinated than the boys. As a result, they tend to excel with the martial arts. The culture they come from tends to subordinate women to men, and to promote the subordination of women to men. Through martial arts, these young girls develop greater confidence and an enhanced sense of what they can do as agents. Similarly, the boys develop a greater respect for the girls and their capacities. These martial arts thereby intervene in an ecology of gender relations, contributing to the formation of more equitable relations.

The foregoing discussion of Bloemhof is just a sketch of what an apocalyptic pedagogy aimed at producing ecological subjectivity might look like. Bloemhof does not simply transmit ecological propositions, nor does it simply represent ambience or ecological relations; it *is* ecological. Not only does it foster ecological awareness, but through its practices it intervenes in ecological relations at the natural, urban, social, cultural, and affective level. It is a pedagogy directed at the background that approaches beings in terms of their relatedness and interdependence, rather than one that treats beings as discrete and separated. The production of such agents contributes to the form of subjectivity with the affective, cognitive, and normative powers required to respond to the apocalyptic circumstances in which we today dwell; opening the possibility of the formation of new ways of living.