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**ANONYMITY, PEACE AND SPECULATIVE PRESENCE IN ISABELLE
STENGERS' COSMOPOLITICAL THINKING**

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Abstract: How does speculative pragmatism induce new ways to think, feel, imagine and act? Take Isabelle Stengers’ cosmopolitical proposal. It involves two different concepts of peace: first, the “diplomats’ peace”, which is the always precarious, creative and technical result of contingent negotiations — a compositionist approach that relates to the political realm of representation proper. Second, the “speculative possibility of peace”, which constitutes an indispensable requisite for the cosmopolitical proposal, and which stands beyond its limits, at speculative and erotic distance, as pure process attractor. In the passage from politics to cosmopolitics, what is at stake is the very possibility of a peaceful coexistence between heterogeneous worlds, a peace whose mode of existence is nothing but propositional or virtual, a pure possibility that could as such effectively make a difference. But how can the most abstract, imperceptible and tenuous mode of existence possibly induce transformations of a political kind? How can it arouse our faculty of imagination and operate as a ‘lure for feeling’? How can it get a hold over (*faire prise*) and actually “infect” somebody else’s dreams? Here lies perhaps the paradox of the fundamentally anonymous experience of thought and lived abstraction that Stengers calls *speculative presence*, and which expresses a soulful and pragmatist understanding of (cosmo)politics.

Keywords: cosmopolitics, Isabelle Stengers, peace, speculative pragmatism, political philosophy

Introduction¹

Among the philosophers of science writing in French, Isabelle Stengers (1949–) is probably the most recalcitrant. A “true mobilized scientist who chose to desert” as she likes to describe herself, this free electron of thought has found refuge in the philosophy department of the Université libre de Bruxelles, where she initiates her students into the abstract charms of speculative philosophy and the political practices of neo-pagan sorcerers coming from the alter-globalist movement. Her abundant theoretical production is articulated in a free and original way around renewing the relation between science and philosophy, and a constructivist and cosmopolitical mode of thinking centered on the idea of an ecology of practices. Throughout she is inspired by a single and same concern: what has made us so vulnerable, so ready to justify the destructions committed in the name of progress?

Stengers fully subscribes to the task Whitehead assigns to philosophy: to take care of our “modes of thought”, and to “civilize” our abstractions by enlarging our imagination. Speculative philosophy is not critical or deconstructivist. Instead, it is “constructivist,” “happily celebrating that our speculative sentences can never define what they mean but always appeal for an imaginative leap” (Stengers, *Penser* 238). Its aim is to construct conceptual tools capable of conferring to the situation “the power to make us think, imagine and be adventurous” (Pignarre and Stengers 7). Or in other words: every *matter of fact* can be turned into a *matter of concern*, provided a certain dose of inventiveness and speculative generosity.

Stengers takes great care when it comes to characterizing the mode of presence and the specific efficacy of her constructivist or speculative pragmatist stance. From her most abstract considerations on the status of speculative propositions in *Penser avec Whitehead* to her provocative characterization of capitalism as a witchcraft system of capture in her book *Capitalist Sorcery* written with Philippe Pignarre, Stengers constantly emphasizes the power of words and ideas to work as efficacious “lures for feeling.” “Our words must be stammered out there, where angels fear to tread,” Stengers says following Gregory Bateson (Stengers, *Beyond* 239). But how can abstract

¹ Elements of the section “Introduction” and of the following section, “Ecology of practices and the cosmopolitical proposal”, have been previously published in Dutch in Bordeleau and van Tuinen, 440-452.

speculative propositions possibly induce transformations of a political kind? How can they get a hold on (*faire prise*) and actually “infect” somebody else’s dreams? And how can they eventually arouse our faculty of imagination and make it “leap” into pure thought?

It is indeed not easy to figure out just how speculative pragmatism, and more specifically, Stengers’ ecology of practices and her cosmopolitical proposal, concretely define their interventional power to induce new ways to think, feel, imagine and act. Effective or efficient political intervention is indeed one of Stengers’ main concerns and it is often explicitly thematized, especially in her books aimed at a larger audience. In *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism* (2015), she addresses those who are “in suspension”, those who know that we must “do something” but are paralyzed by the actual political situation. She in fact situates herself in the proximity of a certain Marxism, “amongst those who want to be the inheritors of a history of struggles undertaken against the perpetual state of war that capitalism makes rule” (Stengers, *Catastrophic* 23). She also takes great care to mark a distance from political discourses that, tacitly or not, are based on the alleged necessity of governing the masses or protecting the people against themselves for their own good. In a way reminiscent of Rancière’s radical conception of democracy, Stengers considers that “politics, in its meaningful sense (*au sens qui importe*), starts not with a people that has finally become trustworthy, but with the abandonment of the defenses that identify it as not trustworthy, that define it as irresponsible” (Stengers, *Catastrophic* 168). This rather optimistic and challenging political vision is decidedly turned toward the future; and as she likes to remind us through the often-quoted words of Whitehead, *it is the business of the future to be dangerous*.

As one can easily figure out, this emphasis on radical democracy differs from Peter Sloterdijk’s way of understanding and dramatizing the situation of the noble productive elements or “forces vives” in contemporary societies. In the last instance, what is at stake here are contrasting modes of thinking the relation between speculation and politics. For those familiar with Sloterdijk’s work, and as suggested in his book *Der Starke Grund zusammen zu sein* (*The Great Reason for Being-Together*, 1998, untranslated), Sloterdijk’s great philosophical and “megalopathic” problem is to think and articulate *the passage between speculation and effective practices of government*,

in a way that is ultimately guided by Nietzsche's ethics of generosity and its evangelical proclamation of noble self-exacerbation.² This latter idea somehow resonates with Stengers' friendly critique of Sloterdijk's prophetic stance. Stengers and Sloterdijk's diverging understanding of the relation between speculation and politics is something I will revisit later on. For now, I will limit myself to a brief presentation of Stengers' cosmopolitical proposal and its speculative possibility of peace, and then explore the fundamentally anonymous experience of thought or what I would prospectively call *an art of lived abstraction* at the core of Stengers' idea of "speculative presence."

Ecology of practices and the cosmopolitical proposal

Stengers' overarching and multi-faceted idea is the ecology of practices and its political corollary, the cosmopolitical proposal. In the wake of Whitehead's cosmological thinking, this idea is pragmatically crafted in order to create new ways of perceiving our ethical-ecological relation to the world. Interestingly, the notion of peace is crucial to this cosmopolitical understanding: "Cosmopolitics defines peace as an ecological production of actual togetherness, where "ecological" means that the aim is not toward a unity beyond differences, which would reduce those differences through a goodwill reference to abstract principles of togetherness, but toward a creation of concrete, interlocked, asymmetrical, and always partial graspings." (Stengers, *Beyond* 249) Stengers' pragmatist philosophy (in the sense of William James) radically refuses any position that proposes to transcend or escape "the actual limitations of our actuality toward some dreamed universality" (Stengers, *Beyond* 249).

In the context of speculative pragmatism, it is essential to recognize that the notion of an ecology of practices does not seek to promote pacification. This perspective aligns with the philosophical interpretations of thinkers like Deleuze and Foucault regarding Nietzsche's concept of force, as well as Rancière's idea that dissensus is integral to the political sphere. An ecology of practices is irreducible to processes that attempt to pacify conflicts by imposing overarching, universally applicable abstractions such as "human nature" or "general interest." Instead, speculative pragmatism

² For a deeper analysis of Sloterdijk's account of speculation as upward movement in the context of his theory of *aphrogenetics* or cultural bubble formation, see my "On Ascensional Movement: Sloterdijk with Whitehead" (Bordeleau 2021).

emphasizes the need to engage with the multifaceted, dynamic, and sometimes conflicting nature of practices in their unique contexts. Or as Stengers puts it: “A peace producing philosophy cannot be reduced to some kind of objective description that should be accepted once misunderstandings and illegitimate extrapolations are cleared away” (Stengers, *Beyond* 244). In a speculative pragmatist perspective, each experience is to be conceived in the full affirmative deployment of what is important for itself. In Stengers’ idiom, this amounts to saying that practices are by nature *divergent*: “the way a practice, a mode of life or a being diverge designates what is important to them, in a sense that is not subjective but constitutive – if what is important to them can’t be made important, they will be mutilated or destroyed” (Stengers, *Catastrophic* 148). The essentially divergent nature of practices resists “any consensual definition of a common good that would assign them roles and turn them into functional parts of public order, whatever its claims to excellence” (Stengers, *Including* 16).

In accordance with Deleuze’s usage of the term, Stengers frequently characterizes practitioners as “idiots,” a provocative yet wholly affirmative portrayal highlighting the minoritarian aspect of practices. The “idiot” is to be conceived of as a conceptual personae that embodies resistance. She “is the one who always slows the others down, who resists the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action” (Stengers, *Cosmopolitical* 996). The “idiot” doesn’t engage in resistance merely for the sake of opposition. Instead, as a practitioner, she is simply immersed in her element, busy with her own thing or “*à son affaire*”, tied to a matter of concern that cannot be simplified or reduced to some common good. The concept of the “idiot” serves as a means to underscore the always situated relevance of practices: “As Deleuze wrote, an idea always exists as engaged in a matter – that is, as “mattering.” A problem is always a practical problem, never a universal problem mattering for everybody. Learning is always local” (Stengers, *Including* 28). As practitioner, the “idiot” typically tends to embrace semi-private, highly personalized “idioms” that are not intended to attain unanimous agreement or universally valid assertions. The cosmopolitical proposition, as a result, addresses practitioners as capable of conceiving their connection to the world from the vantage point of their dynamic and ever singular becomings. “To fabulate an ecology of practices is to fabulate

practitioners who are apt to present themselves on the mode that constitutes their ‘force’” (Stengers, *Vierge* 230).

Such emphasis on the idiotic singularity of practices, their inherent distinctiveness from one another, also underscores their inherent vulnerability. Stengers is committed to crafting a speculative eco-relational framework in which each practice can relate to one another without “losing grip” (*perdre prise*) on what is indispensable for its own continued existence. This approach seeks to maintain the vitality and integrity of each practice while facilitating meaningful interrelations with others. It is in that sense that she can say that “what is valuable must in the first place be defined as vulnerable (Stengers, *Catastrophic* 103), a formula that resumes Stengers’ mode of dramatization of thought as well as her political *modus operandi*.

It is in this perspective that Stengers has revisited Deleuze and Guattari’s nomad/sedentary dichotomy. Interestingly, that is, in contrast to the conventional celebration of the nomadic element, she places unexpected emphasis on what she defines as the “sedentary component of practices.”³ Consequent with the terms of the ecology of practices she is proposing, Stengers argues that “the one who is dangerous, irremediably destructive or tolerant, is someone who believes himself to be ‘purely nomadic’” (Stengers, *Curse* 373), that is to say, the moderns accompanied with their all terrain delegation of experts. And indeed, for such modern practitioners,

only tolerance can protect the sedentary from conquest, destruction, or the slavery to which confrontation to the nomad condemns them. This is why nomad’s experience of the fact that they too have a territory is the very condition of an answer to the cosmopolitical question (Stengers, *Curse* 373).

Stengers’s recurrent emphasis on *oikos*, *domus* or sedentarity must be understood in its most literal sense, that is, as relative to the production of an *ethos*, a manner of being through which one ‘in-habits’ and produces an existential territory. One needs to understand existential territory in a non-geographical manner, more like a processual locality constantly generating its own consistency. Indeed, in the perspective of an

³ For a more detailed account of this question using the cinema of Tsai Ming-Liang as a case study, see Bordeleau, “The care for opacity: On Tsai Ming-Liang’s conservative filmic gesture,” 115–131.

ecology of practices that promotes transductive experiences of deterritorialisation⁴, the sedentary component refers to the interiority of a “fold,” a minimum of belonging, a threshold of territoriality, a differential vulnerability – that is, a *soul* – that constitutes itself as a practical limit against the destructiveness of generalized equivalence. The “soul,” as it is understood here, has nothing substantial – if by that it is meant that it contains a stable and immutable core which is capable of holding itself and returning. Rather, in the perspective of speculative pragmatism, the “soul is a mode of functioning that occasionally happens, not the ultimate truth of our experience” (Stengers, *Cosmopolitical* 53–4). Or again, as Whitehead has pointed out with his usual sobriety and rigor, we *become* souls. From this perspective, the soul testifies to the fact that we are (becoming) capable of entertaining possibilities as such, with all their corollary doubts, hopes, excitations and hesitations. It is proof that we find ourselves in a position to encounter and entertain propositions as so many abstractions to be lived, as so many lived abstractions: “The soul is not defined by its limitations, but rather by what I’d call ‘leaps of the imagination’, not community of intuition, or appropriation, but becomings triggered by something that cannot explain them, by the proliferation, henceforth experienced as such, of those existants that are propositions” (Stengers, *Penser* 490).⁵ Thus, following speculative pragmatism, to take care of one’s soul is to care for one’s modes of abstraction, which are constitutive of one’s practice.

This affirmation of the soulful component of a practice thus opposes the modernist and hegemonic understanding of economics: all things – all practices – are not equal! As Stenger and Vierge observe, “whoever is engaged in an activity such that ‘all ways of doing are not equivalent’ is, in this sense, a practitioner. This means of course that an economic order in which it is normal to ‘sell one’s own workforce’ is an order dedicated to destroy practices (160). In “Including Nonhumans in Political Theory: Opening Pandora’s box?”, Stengers has perhaps produced her most eloquent

⁴ “Therefore, the touchstone of cosmopolitics is the “deterritorialization” that is imposed on the totality of modern nomadic practices by the question opened by whom present himself, concerning a given problem, as a sedentary refusing to play the game” (Stengers, *Cosmopolitique* 353) (my translation).

⁵ This is my translation from the French original. This passage has been quite significantly changed in the English translation. Here is the new version of it (note the replacement of “soul” by “human experience”): “The specificity of human experience is not defined by its limitations, but rather by ‘leaps of the imagination’ that respect no limitation. Of course, community of intuition still rules and even proliferates. But it may also be experienced as such. In addition, the entertainment of a new proposition is felt as an event” (Stengers, *Thinking* 442).

and straightforward description of the way she problematizes and dramatizes the vulnerability of practices:

My approach aims at activating the feeling that we live in a cemetery of already destroyed practices that have been unable to defend their obligations against the ‘outside’, be it because of persecutory violence (remember witch hunting, for instance); soft pressure to conform to the demands of public rationality; deconstructive human sciences relaying in the name of science a consensual climate of derision; or direct capitalist redefinition in the name of progress (think of the so-called economy of knowledge and the already instituted techniques of assessing academic ‘quality’) (Stengers, Including 28).

Stengers’ immanentist ecology of practices leads to a radically egalitarian conception of politics, rejecting any justification of government based on a proclaimed irresponsibility of the people and its need for enlightened guidance. In affirming that all practices are minoritarian, Stengers’ position draws on *A Thousand Plateaus*’ critique of the state and its affirmation of the line of flight over conflict as core source of intelligibility, taking great care to distance herself from certain political trends that have led to thinking of political mobilization as an end in itself. She is, for example, particularly critical of what she calls the “conceptual Marxist theater” and the staging of global antagonism (like Hardt and Negri’s generalization of the multitude as opposed to the Empire for example), defining the ecology of practices against any forms of epic or apocalyptic rhetoric (Stengers, Vierge 259). This point is made particularly clear in her discussion of Agamben and Tiqqunian politics in the interview *Le soin des possibles* (Bordeleau and Stengers).

The situation of speculative peace in the cosmopolitical proposal

If politics, for Stengers, is a contingent practice that necessarily involves a certain degree of exposure or representation, she also argues that it is only against the cosmopolitical horizon that we can imagine a world in which each and every singular practice would be “saved” as such. She therefore consistently works with two different concepts of peace: the *diplomats’ peace*, which is the always precarious, creative and technical result of contingent negotiations limited by the political realm of representation proper; and *the*

speculative possibility of peace, which constitutes an indispensable requisite for the cosmopolitical proposal, and which stands beyond the former's limits, at speculative and erotic distance, as a pure process attractor. Stengers draws this latter idea directly from what Whitehead calls, in the wake of Platonism, "higher generalities" or "Persuasive Agencies", which participate in the energizing of ideas that produces the civilized order. For Whitehead, "the idea is a prophecy which procures its own fulfillment" (Whitehead 285), and one of the most important ideas in this sense is precisely that of peace:

The Peace that is here meant (...) is a positive feeling which crowns the "life and motion" of the soul. (...) It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, unverballed and yet momentous in its coordination of values. (...) The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a gift. The deliberate aim at Peace very easily passes into its bastard substitute, Anesthesia. (...) Peace keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at finesse beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. (...) This inner feeling belonging to this grasp of the service of tragedy is Peace – the purification of the emotions" (Whitehead 286).

Whitehead's inspired description of the idea of Peace marks a distance with negotiated peace and the realm of representation. Peace is sensually described as a broadening of feeling and the emergence of an unverballed metaphysical insight; moreover, in perfect echo with one of the main concerns of an ecology of practices, it is also distinguished from pacification or anesthesia. There is something seemingly ecstatic in Whitehead's account of the idea of Peace that suggests certain proximity with the Heideggerian notion of *Gelassenheit* which is so crucial for Sloterdijk, or with Agamben's idea of inoperativeness or *désœuvrement*. In *Idea of Prose*, Agamben in fact notices that the word "peace" (*pax*) refers to the idea of pact and mutual recognition, while true peace is associated with *otium*, often translated as leisure, which etymologically means "void", and refers to an essential *désœuvrement* or inoperativeness, free of any finality – "a pure gesture" (Agamben 63). As for Whitehead, this characterization of peace as *désœuvrement* works literally as an *entrée en matière*, an invitation to experience the mattering of the world beyond, or better, below representations – to exist in the

nameless, as Heidegger would put it. Sloterdijk's version of this idea is particularly suggestive:

Our true self-experience in original Nobodiness remains in this world buried under taboo and panic. Basically, however, *no life has a name*. The self-conscious nobody in us – who acquires names and identities only through its “social birth” – remains the living source of freedom. The living Nobody, in spite of the horror of socialization, remembers the energetic paradises beneath the personalities. Its life soil is the mentally alert body, which we should call not *nobody* but *yesbody* and which is able to develop in the course of individuation from an areflexive “narcissism” to a reflected “self-discovery in the world cosmos” (Sloterdijk 73, my emphasis).

Speculative presence, anonymity and propositional efficacy

Nonetheless, I think we should mostly resist this rapprochement between Heideggerian *Gelassenheit* or relief and Whitehead's general endeavor, for a number of reasons that I will now try to formulate. What is ultimately at stake here I believe is the specific mode of existence of *speculative presence* and how it might slightly diverge from Sloterdijk's evangelical proclamation of self-exacerbation as a generous, noble and eventually relaxed *modus vivendi*.

In “Beyond Conversation: The Risk of Peace”, Stengers argues that “the fabrication of peace-making propositions cannot be identified with peace as an experience” (Stengers, *Beyond* 245). She does so while knowing perfectly that Whitehead's book *The Adventure of Ideas* ends on a description of peace as experience – precisely the excerpt I have just cited before. But why does she nonetheless insist on distinguishing the speculative possibility of *a* peace from the description of its actual experience? Is she simply folding back on some kind of Kantian position, where ideals are to be evoked but never attained? And what does it mean to speak of speculative presence if no effective presence (even of a propositional kind) is eventually to be considered? Are we then falling back into some sort of deconstructionist infinite deferral? Stengers' immediate answer is simple: she claims that “the experience of peace will never come into existence as an application of any philosophical system” (Stengers, *Beyond* 246), because philosophy is precisely not the cultivation of wisdom (or peace for

that matter), but, as the etymology suggests, the name of a relation of friendship to it. This answer stresses the specific cultural context in which peace-producing philosophies operate as an antidote, a cultural context characterized by a “very dangerous self-definition [that] we have inherited from our tradition,” and which mostly consists in the poisonous power conferred to truth as “a purifying, polemical power that [...] leads us to associate progress with the purging of past illusions” (Stengers, *Beyond* 247). Along these lines, Stengers will for example argue that Whitehead’s speculative thought is solely relevant “in a world in which it is normal to make war in the name of the truth”⁶ (Stengers, *Penser* 29).

Once again, we see how speculative pragmatism is essentially concerned with the question of propositional efficacy, or of “how to turn an opposition into a possible matter of contrast” (Stengers, *Beyond* 236). In the technical idiom of Isabelle Stengers, propositional efficacy is said to designate a *culture of the interstices*, which *grosso modo* corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of “taking things by the middle,” that is, as cosmic events. Along these lines, speculative presence is thus thought of as an infection that could get a hold over (*faire prise*) and induce an imaginative leap that engages a becoming. Tellingly, when she tries to characterize this infectious mode of operation, Stengers refers to the delicate interstices where dreams meet each other. “[O]nly dreamers can accept the modification of their dream. Only dreams and stories [fabulations], because they are the enjoyment of living values, can receive the interstices without the panic effect of people who believe themselves to be in danger of losing hold” (Stengers, *Thinking* 516-17). The influence of a dream on another dream is a fundamentally anonymous event. And in the last instance, speculative presence involves a fundamentally anonymous event of thought.

Accept the capture and become a gear: it is on these depersonalizing and somewhat strangely programmatic words that Isabelle Stengers concludes her monumental *Thinking with Whitehead*, first published in French in 2002. This suggestive landing point for what could be considered her *magnum opus* deserves further consideration. The formula synthesizes, or rather, dramatizes, as Stengers likes to say, a movement of thought that runs across the whole book and culminates in the

⁶ I am translating these last two quotes from the original French version because the English version of the volume did not include them.

notion of speculative presence. Speculative presence involves a fundamentally anonymous event of thought: “No longer the thought of someone about something, but thought experiencing itself as anonymous, as if produced not by the thinker but by its very movement” (Stengers, *thinking* 267). Speculative presence is thus about propositions that make us feel, propositions that possess us rather than us possessing them; it is about cutting-edge experiences of infinite speed which are, indeed, potential sources of infinite, or speculative, generosity.

But why speak of speculative *presence*, or in other words, of the very presence of the speculative? For posthumanist Deleuzians and other academics, the term “presence” might sound problematic. It might indeed suggest something simply human, too human. Here, one might think of Deleuze’s letter to Mireille Buydens, published as a foreword to her book on Deleuze’s esthetics, where he informs the young author that he is slightly uncomfortable with the notion of presence, because, he says, it is too “pious.” One might think here of Deleuze’s lasting rejection of phenomenology, for, he says, it has blessed too many things. For Stengers, the word “presence” suggests an efficacy that goes beyond that of a mere argument. Along this line, she will for example evoke the “interstitial presence of poets” (Stengers, *Thinking* 557). In Stengers’ work, speculative presence characterizes, I would argue, a literally unimaginable experience, that is, an experience of thought *without* image, at the threshold of the human and the more-than-human.

Stengers is not simply proclaiming the virtue of “the impersonal” as a way to avoid the all-too-common over-emphasis on the (human) subject underlying the act of thinking; nor is she indulging in some neo-materialist celebration of generalized relationality or the entanglement of all things, as we often encounter as a more-than-human answer to our anthropocenic condition. Not that all things aren’t ontologically interconnected to some degree or other, or that we shouldn’t indeed as earthbound beings raise awareness about our perilous ecological condition; the problem is rather to characterize the modes of mutual implication in a way that actually *makes* a difference. How does the ecologization of thought force us to think ecology differently? In other words, considering that, in the end, we are only interested in problems that demand the very transformation of our body and language, *what does differential skin in the game feel like?*

Propositions have the power to possess us rather than us possessing them. They behave like lures for feeling, capable of inducing a leap of imagination that generates a process of transformation, a becoming. They bring us to the edge of lived abstractions. Stengers' description of Whitehead's mode of implication in his own thinking is paradigmatic in this regard. She is particularly attentive to the way Whitehead, a mathematician by trade turned metaphysician and cosmologist later in his career, is *obliged* by the concepts, schemes and problematizations he articulates. This speculative machinery sets forth a pragmatist "art of consequences," that is:

a process of empirical experimentation-verification that is akin to trance, because in it thought is taken, captured, by a becoming that separates it from its own intentionality. A "mechanical" becoming in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, in the sense that thinkers can produce this thought only because they have themselves become a piece, or gear, of what has captured them, much more than they have created it" (Stengers, *Thinking* 519).

The art of accepting the capture and becoming a gear of one's own abstract thinking machine is often described by Stengers as an *adventuring* (*mise à l'aventure*) of thought. The adventuring here does not only connote a "free and wild creation of concepts," as the subtitle of *Thinking with Whitehead* goes; it also conveys the sense of a specific trajectory of discovery, a qualitative value discovery process generating its own defining coordinates and means of orientation along the way.

Keeping in mind the living interstice between the speculative possibility of a peace and its actual experience as lived abstraction, the notion of speculative presence invites us to think of how speculative pragmatism produces spiritual or ethopoietical effects of a very particular kind, that is: how it induces specific modes or qualities of presence which affirm an active relation to futurity. In playful contrast with pop psychology ideas about self-actualization and the fulfillment of one's own potential, we could perhaps define speculative presence as an art or technique of self-virtualization. In this regard, I believe that speculative pragmatism indeed greatly contributes to the formation of a whole generation of thinkers that share a common passion for the fundamentally anonymous experience of thought, and, perhaps, a more obscure common feeling of how the sensuous experience of their proprioceptive and self-

abstracting bodily processes rejoins the infinite movement – at Whiteheadian godspeed perhaps? – of thought.⁷

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⁷ In *Semblance and Event*, Brian Massumi offers an insightful perspective on this question when he affirms that “proprioception is natively inventive. It is the body’s in-born technique for the production of nonsensuous similarity. The body’s automatic abstraction method. (...) All techniques of existence bringing forth virtual events work with proprioception and its privileged connection with thought” (Massumi 125).

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