

" 'Foucault was not a person':
Idolatry and the Impersonal in Roberto Esposito's *Third Person*

by Timothy Campbell

The title of my paper comes from one of the most surprising passages in Roberto Esposito's most recent work *Third Person: Politics of Life and Philosophy of the Impersonal*. Foucault not a person? In what sense was he not a person and if not what was he? Leaving aside for the moment Esposito's answer, we should note that Esposito's interest in the concept of the person (as well as the personal) has been a recurrent theme in his work over the last fifteen years. Beginning with *Categories of the Impolitical*, continuing through the trilogy of *Communitas: Origin and Destiny of Community*, *Immunitas: Protection and Negation of Life*, and *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, and now with *Third Person*, Esposito has taken up a number of different perspectives in what amounts to a thorough-going deconstruction of the concept of person. Certainly one of the most significant approaches for Esposito of late has been the biopolitical in his genealogy of the juridical person as "the pedestal of an immense pyramid of sacrifice on whose steps millions of dead have fallen (*Terza persona*, 169). Clearly Esposito's own understanding of the impersonal cannot be separated from the politics of life of the subtitle, what we will want to call his affirmative biopolitics. And yet an earlier term seems to me to be equally at work in Esposito's more recent engagements with the personal -- that term is the impolitical. Indeed one of my principal arguments today is that we cannot properly

understand Esposito's inflection of the impersonal without uncovering the deeply impolitical nature of the impersonal, particularly as it emerges from his discussion of Simone Weil's writings on idolatry and the Good in the pages he dedicates to it in *Categories*. Out of these impolitical reflections on the concept of person, Esposito will assemble a notion of relationality among all living phenomena that will become central to his declination of the impersonal in *Third Person*, while informing Esposito's own particular inflection of the Deleuzian impersonal, an inflection deeply indebted to the notion of idolatry. The answer to why Foucault was not a person will be found there.

The Impolitical

To begin then: what does the impolitical refer to: what are its subject and object? Writing in 1999 in the preface to the re-edition of *Categories of the Impolitical*, Esposito offers a number of different perspectives with which to grasp the elusive concept, though none is more important than the question of *tecnica* and its relation to the origin of politics in the modern period. He writes: "This is exactly the originary problem - the problem of the origin -- that the Modern doesn't discover or produce, but is limited to conceptualizing -- in an increasingly conscious manner from Machiavelli onward, which is to say the constitutively 'diabolical nature' of the political -- its irreducibility to a unitary symbol." "From this point of view," Esposito continues, "we can say that it isn't the history of political thought ... that explains the impolitical perspective, but the latter that illuminates and deconstructs the political" (*Categorie*, xxvi). The impolitical, he goes on, recognizes something that the political cannot: that the political originates "together

and within *tecnica*." How so? Where do *tecnica* and politics originate? The answer will be found not surprisingly according to Esposito in the Platonic myth of Prometheus who steals fire for man. This was how mankind received the wisdom "for staying alive; wisdom for living together in society, political wisdom, it did not acquire" (Plato, 321c).

Leaving aside for the moment the echoes between "staying alive" and *zoe* and "political wisdom" and *bios*, what matters most for Esposito in the myth is that politics, which is associated here with "convenient living," originates together with and within *tecnica* such that what is traditionally seen as the first origin (the political) is always secondary with respect to something other out of which it originates, here *tecnica*. In line with Bernard Stiegler's analysis of technique, especially in those pages of *Technics and Time* devoted to Rousseau, Esposito will have politics denote a "defect of origin." Second, Esposito argues in the preface, following Heidegger, that if the origin is a continual 'coming to presence,' the origin can never be fully present to itself. We recall those pages in *What is Called Thinking?* in which Heidegger distinguishes between *Beginn* and *Anfang*: "Certainly the commencement (*Beginn*) is the wrapping that hides the beginning (*Anfang*) and in this sense is indispensable" (*What is Called Thinking?*, 34). Esposito elsewhere will read this as signaling the co-presence of two contradictory movements that fracture the origin. It is, he says, the co-belonging of what is different (commencing and beginning) or it is the contemporaneity of the two, that spells the withdrawal of the origin from any pretense to unity or presence. The origin, inasmuch as it is a coming to presence, is never present to itself and as such cannot be represented: to paraphrase Nancy on this score, there has never been any presence to

the political that does not call into question the distance from the political demanded by such a presence (Nancy, 103). It is this incapacity of representing the origin of politics (or better perhaps, the withdrawal of representation from all attempts at determining the origin of politics) that opens a space for the impolitical. The impolitical is, Esposito will say, "nothing other than the enunciation of this unrepresentability" (*Categorie*, xxvii).

The difficulty of representing or defining the impolitical appears clearly here. The impolitical fundamentally relates to speaking the impossibility of representation, which in turn suggests that the traditional forms of politics are of no use for the impolitical, to the degree that the impolitical offers an emphatic critique of form (and here I would only add that for Esposito critique and crises are never far apart -- hence a critique in form emerges from while simultaneously intensifying crises). And as no form is more central to the political than that of the person, the impolitical decisively breaks with it. I do realize I'm moving quickly here, but a suggestion will help: consider the importance of the concept of person for the political. What is their relation? Essentially the form of the person (as well as the personal or personality) functions as a kind of shorthand for the political; it is the principal mode by which the political takes form (precisely in the form of the person), one implicit in the Schmittian distinction "to which political actions and motivations can be reduced": namely friend and enemy (Schmitt, *Categories of the Political*, 22). The reference to Schmitt is of course no accident as Esposito's "impolitical categories" evokes Schmitt's own "political categories." Yet I would argue Esposito's emphasis on the critique of the personal isn't only or primarily a critique of Schmitt per

se, but rather takes aim at Schmitt as only the most recent and most intense expression of the political form of the person. What truly interests Esposito in the impolitical is the breach it creates for a space to open in which the limits of the personal as privileged form of the political are uncovered.

Politics as Idolatry - The Person

As long as we limit our perspective to the personal as the fundamental category of the political, however, we're still on the outskirts of the relation of the impolitical to the impersonal as Esposito has drawn it. To move further in that direction, I need to introduce idolatry into the discussion. In some sense *Categories of the Impolitical* -- but especially the chapter Esposito devotes to Simone Weil -- is primarily a reflection on modern forms of idolatry. The pages in question are admittedly dense and so what follows can only be a distillation. Esposito begins by asking what characterizes Weil's critique of politics during the period before and after the publication of her essay "Human Personality" (though the translation of the French title, "The Person and the Sacred," captures better the content and stakes of Weil's essay). According to Esposito, what her critique of political parties, majority-driven democracy, and representation share is their deep indebtedness to the myth of "historical development," what Esposito argues is homologous to the myth of Providence "as the personal will of God" (*Categorie*, 241) Glossing Weil, Esposito writes: "Providence as the historical form of divine pedagogy is nothing other than the making collective of the metaphysics of the person; its expansion into 'becoming'" (240). Becoming is seen here as the object of Providence,

of Providence as the attempt to limit or better to govern becoming, what Esposito describes as the "juridical governability of becoming in its norms and its exceptions" (241). Providence not only names that which limits becoming to norm and exception, but in parallel fashion circumscribes the force of historical development to mere form, to mere law, or order. The entity that more than any other embodies this attempt to relate the contingency of history to norm is the State. Modern idolatry registers an excessive devotion to the State to the degree it is the modern form *per eccellenza* of Providence.

The focus on idolatry allows us to mark the differences between the political and the impolitical through the concept of the person. On the side of the political, a semantics of the person affiliated with theology emerges to the degree Providence connotes the "personal" will of God. Providence as a form of the personal is made homologous to the state in modernity thanks to the ease with which the state turns contingency into "norm and exception." Here too the relation of law to the concept of the person is crucial. As Esposito notes "law is always of a part, of a party ... [but] never of all. All doesn't require law" (*Categorie*, 238). Being of a part and not the whole, Providence, either in the form of God or the State, requires violence so that the biased or tendentious characteristic of law is occluded.

The Social Form and Idolatry

A final point, however, needs to be addressed in addition to the personal quality of Providence and that concerns not simply the State, but also the idolatrous nature of

the Social. Esposito writes: "When power is confused with the Good, or worse, when the Good is understood in terms of power, one necessarily falls into idolatry" (230). For Esposito reading Weil, no category more than the Social enacts what theology historically has done, namely to confuse the Good with power. Why? Where precisely does the Social confuse power with the Good? The answer will be found if we consider that no more than in the Social are relations with what is outside of the Social limited. Indeed the Social becomes "the sole level outside of which one cannot establish relations." The idolatrous tendency of the Social therefore is to incorporate every relation within itself, as belonging to it, as being precisely a manifestation of itself, the Social. It can do so, although Esposito doesn't explicitly say this, to the degree it inscribes all relations as relations that occur between persons. This is where the confusion between the Good and power will be found (and therefore where the idolatry of the Social is most apparent): the power that circumscribes relationality to one level, to the level of the personal.

The argument is surely at odds with how we usually understand the social. Often we tend to associate the social precisely with one's relations with other persons; indeed we assume that the social component to human life is undeniably good as it creates a qualified form of life, a political life that the Greeks called *bios*. Yet what Esposito's close reading of Weil attempts to show instead is that the absolutization of the social as the Good blocks other kinds of relations from coming into view, ones with other living phenomena; he then argues that if they do emerge, the Social reinscribes them in a relation between persons (and hence social again). In other words, the idolatrous Social

fails to see the pernicious effects of its compression of relationality to an interaction between the social forms of person. To the degree the political in the modern period is associated with the social and with it to a limited view of relationality, it too is idolatrous.

Carlo Galli captures well the stakes of the idolatrous for our understanding of the impolitical and the impersonal, especially where thinking different political spaces is concerned. Discussing Nancy's perspective on the frontier in his work from 2004, Spazi politici, Galli implicitly nods to the impersonal: "In this optic the frontier ceases to be the rigid fixing of the political figure in space, the border of an identity already given and comes to indicate that which makes possible contiguity and proximity. It isn't that which separates but what joins without really unifying ... This 'impolitical' frontier is the condition of possibility of a spatial configuration that isn't figure, that isn't form; and that is actualized or at least can be actualized in what Nancy calls 'mondialization' "(*Spazi politici*, 163). When he speaks of a "political geometry" as the series of forms to be found "in the gesture by which modern political identities are constructed as closed figurations -- that take on meaning either from the outside or from their own immanent closing" (163) -- Galli too implicitly highlights the anti-idolatrous reading of the impolitical. An "impolitical geometry" would then be the name one gives to mondialization, a political space that isn't "theatrical" but "non-representational," one constituted by the pure contingent being of entities and "the network of their relations and their reciprocal relating to one another" (164). In this move away from representation, Galli underscores the deeply idolatrous features of modern political

spaces, and with it the possibility of an impolitical space linked to globalization. Here too we note the implicit anti-Schmittian character of this impolitical space. Galli describes this "opening of space" not as the Schmittian *nomos*, but rather an opening of space associated with those pages of *Being and Time* in which Heidegger speaks not of an individual subject operating "on space," which is to say not acting in the sense of partitioning or distributing with intentionality, but rather one that has, and here I'm quoting Galli, "a non-individualistic, non-rational and non-universal form" lacking in Schmitt.

Esposito for his part chooses not to focus on globalization per se but rather to highlight the ways the impersonal inhabits and emerges from an impolitical geometry of relations and not personal forms. Where the political is idolatrous with all its admiration for norms as well as its submission to the social form of the person, the impolitical marks out a different, antinomial space in which other forms that express the 'non-person' or the impersonal emerge. It is this relationality to other forms not limited to the person -- be they plants, bacteria, viruses, or animals -- that indicates the deep ecological importance of the term impolitical. The impersonal in this earlier reading of Simone Weil suggests for Esposito the possibility that the impersonal names an openness to relationality with forms not limited to the person. Suggested as well it seems to me is the possibility of tracing a genealogy in contemporary ecological criticism precisely in the elaboration of impolitical thought represented not just in the thought of Simone Weil, but also in Bataille as well as, surprisingly, Canetti. The idea is that the impersonal often emerges from impolitical spaces.

Relationality as Impolitical

This emphasis on the impolitical pedigree of the impersonal is confirmed in Esposito's last two works, *Bios* and *Third Person*, though Esposito today is much more likely to substitute the term affirmative biopolitics for the impolitical and thanatopolitics (or its weaker version, negative biopolitics) for the political. Less emphasis on the impolitical, however, hasn't translated into a marginalization of the impersonal. Indeed the impersonal has moved to the center of Esposito's ontology of the actual. The impersonal for Esposito today names a politics of life in opposition to the mere mastery of life, one that is utterly enthralled by the concept of the personal. To see how consider Esposito's earlier perspective on the social in *Categories of the Impolitical*, in which relationality is squeezed by the social form of the person. The question there and in *Third Person* becomes how to think a radical opening to relationality through the impersonal. The first step consists in localizing a stratum of life not limited to the form of the person. To do so Esposito proposes two itineraries.

In the first he will offer his own anti-idolatrous reading of vegetative and animal functions in Bichat. We recall Bichat's defense of the quantitative and functional prevalence of organic life over animal life; that where organic life continues during sleep, animal life is interrupted. Two different forms of life emerge with different goals and different "intensities" (as well as two different deaths as Agamben's own reading of Bichat goes to great lengths to demonstrate). The result of this reading is to raise the question of "the relation between the nature of the living subject and the form of

political action" (*Terza persona*, 29). For Esposito, the conclusion can only be that "there doesn't exist ... a political subject, as a basis for willful action, because the very same will, even if it is connected to animal life, is profoundly enervated in a bodily regime sustained and in good portion governed by the vegetative part" (*Terza persona*, 30). That being the case, cracks begin to appear in the limits of the very idea of person, especially in its juridical and political formulation. It becomes possible to imagine how something like the impersonal might be thought. Once that stratum of vegetative life has been localized, the task then becomes how to elaborate vegetative life in such a way as to think it politically outside of traditional forms; and hence to think it impolitically.

The second itinerary is one Esposito sketches in *Bios*. Employing the deeply impolitical categories of birth and individuation, by drawing on Spinoza's theory of life and Gilbert Simondon's reflections on individuation, Esposito suggests that birth, or better the continual rebirth of all life in different guises, provides the ground on which to think political forms not limited to the person. Interestingly, Esposito recuperates the concept of subject here at least initially in opposition to person for marking the impersonal, as it is the subject (and implicitly not the person) which "moves past one threshold" to another (*Bios*, 198). In this liminal movement the subject who moves across thresholds is transformed into a form of life that is able not only to escape the strictures of the personal, but by so doing can now relate impersonally with other forms of life, as they too have crossed the same threshold. The assumption (and the result) is a shared *bíos*, always already impolitical since it is the basis upon which the continued birth of individuation occurs. This, we should be clear, is no ontology of the individual

(Campbell, *Idolatry and Third Person*)

(or, for that matter, the subject), but rather a recognition that the appearance of life, be it individual or collective, is characterized by individuation.

The emphasis on individuation (and not the individual) allows Esposito in turn not only to argue that the individual is the subject that produces itself through individuation, which is to say that the individual "cannot be defined outside of the political relationship with those that share the vital experience," but also that the individuated subject is the one that is able to relate to forms of life impersonally in ways that the unindividuated subject, the social person, cannot (*Bios*, 199). The point being that to the degree individuation is synonymous with the impersonal, such an impersonal form is already primed for non-Social relationality. Esposito, following in the footsteps of Weil, will privilege the individuated form of life over that of the person to the degree it allows for relationality with other living phenomena. Put somewhat differently, the impersonal of *Categories of the Impersonal* is imprinted in *Bios* with a strong defense and indeed celebration of the individuated form of life as always already inscribed in *bios*.

Idolatry and The Deleuzian Impersonal

Not coincidentally, it is here that Esposito appropriates a Deleuzian perspective on the impersonal, one that remains deeply wedded to the impolitical and anti-idolatrous one set forth in *Categories*. Esposito, like Agamben, finds in Deleuze the principal philosopher for thinking the impersonal today. Writing apropos of what he calls the pre-individual and impersonal "event," Esposito focuses on those texts from Deleuze in

which the impersonal "isn't reduced in fact either to an enunciating subject nor to the objectivity of a state of things that have been inserted into a chain of cause and effect" (*Terza persona*, 173-174). Rather, according to Esposito, Deleuze offers "a more complex conception according to which the individual on the one hand identifies himself or herself with the impersonal event, but on the other is still able to keep pace with the event so as to get to the point where he or she can turn it around against itself" (174). What makes the event impersonal appears to be a paradoxical identification with event on the part of the individual so forceful that it doesn't remain limited or contained by a personal perspective on the part of the one observing, a perspective indebted to the concept of person to the degree that it is the person who inserts the event in a field of cause and effect. The identification exceeds the bounds of the personal such that the individual subject, moving beyond mere identity adopts another perspective in which he or she is "exposed" to an event that exceeds all previous forms premised on the person or the personal. In short, the impersonal event sets in motion a series of liminal movements in the individual, the effect of which is to allow him or her to move beyond personal identification to impersonal exposure. Esposito writes: "Precisely because it is impersonal, the event coincides with an emission of singularity that doesn't have either the apperceptive form of the I or that transcendental form of consciousness" (175).

Obviously we can hear echoes in this gloss of Deleuze's conjunction of the impersonal and immanence, but there is another element suggested from Esposito's earlier reading of Weil and the impersonal: where there is cause and event -- the apperceptive I in this case -- the social and political form of the person isn't far behind.

But I would go further. Esposito is implicitly critiquing those who fail to make the event impersonal enough to the degree they reinscribe it within some reconfigured notion of the Social. The result is to rehearse the idolatrous features of the political that Weil unearthed in her reading of modernity. That is the case whenever we fail to register the impersonal as an impolitical form.

Yet Esposito's engagement with the Deleuzian impersonal isn't based solely on marking the remnants of idolatry in other perspectives on the impersonal. The other part of the impolitical and impersonal relation emerges in *Third Person* precisely in Esposito's reading of becoming animal in Deleuze. We recall Deleuze's repeated emphasis on the reality of becoming animal "even though one does not in reality become animal" (Deleuze, *Thousand Plateaus*, 273). Esposito, however, repeatedly returns to the indistinction between "becomings-animal" and "becomings-molecular" in *Thousand Plateaus*, where becoming doesn't signify "to imitate or identify with something or someone" but rather "the emitting of particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity or ... to emit particles that enter that zone of proximity" (Deleuze, *Thousand Plateaus*, 273). Esposito hears in these passages as well as in the Deleuzian term haecity -- those "relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected" (Deleuze, *Thousand Plateaus*, 261) -- the multiplicity of relations with what surrounds us or with what we carry inside us. Esposito posits a becoming-animal at the center of the impersonal, where what counts "even before the relation with the animal is above all the becoming of a life that is individuated only by breaking the chains and the

prohibitions, the barriers and the borders that man has constructed" (*Third Person*, 182). The impersonal with its becoming-animal "puts in relation completely heterogeneous terms like man, animal, and micro-organism" (*Third Person*, 183). Here we come face to face again with the non-idolatrous relationality that goes under the name of the impolitical, one that doesn't coincide with the form of person. The suggestion is that what the human, the animal, and the micro-organism share is precisely their not being captured by and in the form of person. Esposito confirms as much soon after: "... the becoming animal of human alludes to a mode of being human that does not coincide either with person nor with thing" (*Terza Persona*, 183). This mode of being human Esposito will call paradoxically "the living person."

The Relationality of Living

Much of course remains to be said about the features of the "living person," especially about the descriptor living as opposed to non-living (here living for instance both suggests another, spectral form of the person which does not live, as well as the possibility that a "living person" lives to the degree that that it relates to other living phenomena impersonally, a form or a figuring with, literally a con-figuration, that is open to relationality and not merely the social). So too we might want to follow out in ways that I haven't the deep affinity between the impersonal in Esposito with a thorough-going critique of neo-liberalism and its dispositifs, especially when we recall the passage Esposito cites from Weil: "So far from its being his person, what is sacred in a human being is the impersonal in him. Everything which is impersonal in man is

(Campbell, *Idolatry and Third Person*)

sacred, and nothing else" (Weil, "Human Personality," 74), where what makes a person a living person is what cannot be thought of as sacred. We might also note the critique Esposito's analysis implicitly offers of Hardt and Negri's idolatrous reading of the multitude's biopower. To the degree they deploy the concept of person or the residue of the person in the rhizomatic singularities of the multitude for instance -- essentially substituting those for the earlier category of the social -- their understanding of biopower assumes a number of idolatrous features. In their failure to insist on the category of the impersonal across *Empire* and *Multitude* they limit qualified political life, *bios*, to lives that can be counted and contained with the borders of the person.

Foucault as Third Person

This is the impolitical context for the impersonal in which Esposito has worked for twenty years. It is also the context for understanding why Foucault was not a person or better why his person was a third person as Esposito observes. To see why Esposito asks us to consider Foucault's well-known analysis of the modalities of enunciation and the role of the subject. Foucault, we know, doesn't deny that within every enunciation or series of enunciations, there is a place for the subject, only that this subject, "rather than referring to an empirical or a transcendental I, is always vacant, in the sense that it can be occupied from time to time by individuals produced by the same enunciation in a modality that is irreducible to the first or the second person and which only agree with the impersonality of the third person" (*Third Person*, 164) To speak impersonally, therefore, is to speak in the third person; to speak out of an impolitical space turned

inside out in which I or you do not speak, but one in which language itself does through its sole medium of the third person. How does the third person speak then? Esposito quotes Deleuze on this question. Speaking of the force field that was Foucault, Deleuze calls Foucault's language "an immense 'there is,' in the third person, the opposite of what is the person" (163), which seems absolutely right: there is discipline, there is punish, there is biopolitics, and there is power.

There is also life. The individuated life that forms the *bios* of all that live today functions as the third person does in Foucault's analysis, except that in Esposito's account life is put in the position of language and the enunciated in the position of the individuated form of life. This accounts for the echoes of impersonal life in Esposito's description of the enunciated "as a pure multiplicity, an emission of singularity that cannot be derived from an individual or collective consciousness" (*Third Person*, 164). This suggests something else, namely that Esposito has essentially translated the third person into the "living person" I noted above, one who lives to the degree he or she is open to a larger horizon of relations not encompassed by the social form of the person. The suggestion is that as one repeatedly takes up the position of the third person, one draws closer to the living person, closer to occupying the space in which impersonal events occur, and so becoming the form of life inscribed in *bios*.

This reading is confirmed earlier in *Third Person* in those pages dedicated once again to Simone Weil and the impersonal. Here the previous anti-idolatrous polemic Weil offered is again put to use, but this time to seemingly different ends. A quote from Weil opens the most important section: "Perfection is impersonal. Our personality is the

part of us that belongs to error and sin. The whole effort of the mystic has always been to become such that there is no part left in his soul to say 'I'. But the part of the soul which says 'We' is infinitely more dangerous still" (Weil, 75). From this passage Esposito draws two conclusions that we would do well to dwell on. The first is that the part of the person that is to be refused is precisely the one that says we. The impersonal for Esposito names what blocks the move from 'I' to 'we'; what preserves or shelters the singular form of the first person from a self-destructive move to the general. Here there are clear parallels of course with Esposito's reading of the *munus* in community and immunity as he sketches them in *Communitas*, as well as his singling out in particular of the expropriating features of the communal vis-à-vis the one immunized. But it also suggests something else as well: that the mechanism of community and immunity as well as his reading of the impersonal are implicit responses to the idolatry of the Social; that Esposito's affirmative biopolitics is fundamentally an anti-idolatrous critique of other perspectives that privilege the Social in everything but name. The negative biopolitics of the social which is premised on the crushing of all forms of life into the form of the person sets in motion a reaction of the impersonal.

Much more can (and needs) to be said on this score, but what we can say now is that the biopolitical is what links the anti-idolatrous moments of his elaboration of the impolitical in *Categories of the Impolitical* with the impersonal tenor of his later works. That Esposito adopts a language of immunity for his discussion of the working of the impersonal in *Third Person* therefore is no accident. He writes: "The impersonal isn't the simple opposite of person -- its direct negation -- but something of or in the person that

blocks the immunitary mechanism which places the I in the simultaneously inclusive and excluding circle of We. A point ... that interrupts the natural movement from an individual splitting [*sdoppiamento*] to a collective doubling" (*Third Person*, 125). Here not only is the immunitary mechanism superimposed over the move from I to we, but now idolatry is made homologous to the move from I to we in ways that were only suggested in *Categories*; they are premised here on the concept or as Esposito now refers to it, to the *dispositif* of the person, a *dispositif* that like all *dispositifs* is premised on the separation of the immune from the common.

What, however, is that something "of or in the person" capable of blocking immunization? One possible answer will be found if we circle back to those pages of *Third Person* in which Esposito associates the Deleuzian moment of becoming to the "living person." The passage in question bears repeating: "... the becoming animal of human alludes to a mode of being human that does not coincide either with person or with thing." The non-coincidence of the thing with the mode of being human doesn't however lead to the conclusion that the thing fails to play a role in the constitution of the living person. Rather the relation of being human with the thing is never closer than in the move from I to one; a relation that cannot be found as "I" moves to "we." No more than here does Esposito synthesize the Weilian impersonal with the Deleuzian, a relation with the thing implicit in a relation with the third person, spelling in turn a human mode of being based on a staggeringly ecumenical relationality to the world.

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