

# **Anthropocene Beyond the Logic of Recognition: A Reply to Mansueto’s “Critical Discourses on Technology in the Era of the Anthropocene”**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to develop Mansueto’s discussion on the technological subject against the backdrop of the Anthropocene. By framing the discourse in terms of a logic of recognition present in the Hegelian understanding of culture and nature, I argue that it falls short in terms of realizing the role human beings play in a wider ontology of relations. As a result of this oversight, I proceed to use immanence as the possible logic in addressing the issue of the technological subject in its present geologic signification. I present this paper in four parts, First, I demonstrate the distinction between Anthropocene as a planetary signification that is apart from subjectivity’s ontological configuration, anthropocentrism. Second, I argue against the logic of recognition in its oversight on a wider context of relationality and its orientation towards subject-object relations manifest in the Hegelian understanding of master-slave dialectics. Third, I propose the logic of immanence as a plausible contender in addressing the issue by dissecting and introducing Spinoza’s metaphysics of substance and ontology of relations. Lastly, to situate and address the ethical assumptions in Mansueto’s argument, I argue for an ethics of the imagination to move beyond the dialectical approach and acknowledge the role not only of reason, but experience and relationality that is present in terms of understanding the contemporary technological subject in the era of the Anthropocene.

**Keywords:** Anthropocene, Hegel, Spinoza, relationality, technological subject

## Introduction

In his *Critical Discourses on Technology in the Era of the Anthropocene* published in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Ethics*, Mansueto argues for the use of technology as it is framed in terms of human beings' relation with nature.<sup>1</sup> While I agree with his conclusion that the emancipatory use of technology is a question of ethicality rather than ontology, I wish to explore the question in an entirely different framework. I contend that using the logic of recognition present in his paper falls short on the realization of the role humans play in terms of understanding themselves regarding their place in the world in its current geologic signification: the Anthropocene. I also intend to differentiate the term 'Anthropocene' from anthropocentrism – a way in which the subject is oriented as occupying the central place in terms of ontological structure of reality. I then approach the same topic of technology, Anthropocene, and ethics using Spinoza's philosophy where I argue for an ethics of the imagination. This, I believe, is essential in terms of reframing the question to move beyond the logic and politics of recognition manifest in Mansueto's argument.

This paper is divided into four parts. First, I give an account of the difference between Anthropocene and anthropocentrism. Second, I argue for the case against the logic of recognition. Third, I present the logic of immanence in contrast to the logic of recognition. Lastly, I conclude by using Spinoza's account and ethics of the imagination to enrich the understanding of the contemporary technological subject in the Anthropocene.

## Anthropocene is not Anthropocentrism

The term 'Anthropocene' itself is contested and is being tried to be used formally in terms of scientific research. There is even a debate among the scientific community on putting a precise period on the beginning of the Anthropocene. Crutzen, the leading scientist who advances the idea that we are now living in the 'Anthropocene' and has officially left the Holocene period, owes it to his findings that the activities of the humankind grew significantly and has already become

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<sup>1</sup> Menelito Mansueto, "Critical Discourses on Technology in the Era of the Anthropocene" in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 9, 84-113.

a geological force.<sup>2</sup> This is backed by his statement that almost all of the places in the Earth have been inhabited or visited by human beings, and that it has even set foot on the moon. Additionally, there is also the factor that human beings play a significant role when it comes to altering its geology and ecology. Though it has always been the case even during the Holocene period, Crutzen argues that humankind's control over geology and ecology has increased exponentially and can now be considered in a global scale and will remain so for many years to come.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a new term is required in recognizing the humans' capability of transforming the world and tailoring it according to their liking and necessities.

Not only did the term 'Anthropocene' made rounds among the scientific community especially to that of geology when it was first proposed by Crutzen on the first year of the twenty-first century, but it also caused an intrigue and stirred the interest of other academic disciplines, and the public as well. Disciplines ranging from Earth sciences, as geology naturally impact ecologies that directly concerns environmental science and biology; social sciences that measures and gathers data based on various social systems, economy, and politics; cultural studies which engage with understanding the structures that constitutes to the particularities of a certain culture; to philosophy that conceptualizes and reflects on the possibilities of understanding the world in new ways. As such, the Anthropocene as a period that gives emphasis to the *Anthropos*, paved the way for interdisciplinary studies that directly concerns us as it relays the notion that humanity is a powerful geologic force. As Zalasiewicz points out, the Anthropocene "was coined at a time of dawning realization that human activity was indeed changing the Earth on a scale comparable with some of the major events of the ancient past."<sup>4</sup> However, as much as there is the recognition of scientists and ordinary citizens alike, there are formal ways to officially consider that we are indeed living in the age of the Anthropocene, and that there should be a consensus on the beginning of such an age.

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<sup>2</sup> Crutzen, P. J., & Stoermer, E., "The 'Anthropocene'" in *IGBP Global Change Newsletter*, no. 41, 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Will Steffen, and Paul Crutzen. "The new world of the Anthropocene" in *Environmental Science & Technology* vol. 44, no. 7, 2228-2231.

Unlike other geologic periods, the Anthropocene is different not only because we are currently living in it and experiencing it, but we are also short on data that are needed to be used to officiate it as a scientifically proven and agreed upon geologic period.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, even before Crutzen termed the current geological epoch as the 'Anthropocene,' there are other terms associated to human activity in the world. Terms such as "Noosphere" – initially proposed by Stoppani that we are now living in the world of thought, or knowledge society that which is characterized by humankind's brainpower and technological capacity when it comes to influencing its future and its environment as well, or "Anthropozoic or psychozoic" era proposed by Chardin & Le Roy by identifying human activity as a "new telluric force which in power and universality may be compared to the greater forces of earth."<sup>6</sup> These terms recognize human beings' capacity for massively changing the world as it is capable of thinking, acquiring and inventing new technologies, and use the materials in the environment for its advantage. As such, the Anthropocene as a geologic era proposes that its starting date to be the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reason for this is that it coincides with James Watt's invention of the steam engine in 1784 and was shortly followed by the Industrial Revolution in the West.<sup>7</sup> However, one could always contest that human beings have altered its surroundings ever since, and that by signifying the Anthropocene by recognizing humankind as a geologic force blurs the lines between artificiality and the naturality of things.

While it is true that human beings have always been a force in nature, it was always in ways that are local, and that which are not globally altering. Consider the use of coal in preindustrial times in China and England, it is evident that there is no significant impact in the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>, so it cannot be characterized as

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<sup>5</sup> Zalasiewicz et al., "Are we now living in the Anthropocene?" in *GSA Today*, vol. 18, no. 2, 4-8.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Clark, W.C., *Sustainable Development of the Biosphere*, ed. W.C. Clark, R.E. Munn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 491 in Steffen W., Crutzen P.J., McNeill, J., "The Anthropocene: are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature?" in *Ambio-Journal of Human Environment Research and Management*, vol. 36, no. 8, 614-621. Also see W. Steffen, J. Grinevald, P.J. Crutzen, & J. McNeill, "The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives" in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, vol. 369, no. 1938, 842-867.

<sup>7</sup> Crutzen, & Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene.'"

one of the instantiations of what scientists formally call the Anthropocene.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps what can be considered as characteristic of Anthropocene as an epoch is what the scientists call *The Great Acceleration*, which started from 1945 up until 2000. This is when the first atomic bomb was tested and used, and that a widespread occurrence of scientific and technological breakthrough happened, marking that the humankind indeed is a great force that may soon be able to overwhelm nature and have global reach.<sup>9</sup> However, considering Lewis' and Maslin's recent conclusion that finds the geologic regime as early as 1610, when there was a mass migration of Europeans from the Old World to the New World puts the Anthropocene in a massive gray area of interval than the recent ones.<sup>10</sup> Here, despite different understandings and findings of the time when the Anthropocene as a geologic era really began, the idea of a clear distinction and differentiation must be posited.

Thus, the Anthropocene as an era can clearly be differentiated from anthropocentrism, whereas the latter is the subject's ontological disposition. In other words, and by using Heidegger's term, it is the *enframing* of the human individual's orientation towards its world.<sup>11</sup> To further differentiate, Mahaswa's and Widhianto's paper brilliantly argues that the Anthropocene and anthropocentrism signifies different perspectives of understanding the world.<sup>12</sup> This rests on their argument that the former cannot be claimed by the latter because not everything made by humans are completely controllable. This idea brings forth an understanding of Rivas' Schellingian concept of the takeover of dual-external world as to which nature appears in a negative double-bind, a distinct differentiation between nature and the human – where the Anthropocene acts as the boundary from thinking

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<sup>8</sup> Steffen, Grinevald, Crutzen, & McNeill, "The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, S., Maslin, M. "Defining the Anthropocene" in *Nature* vol. 519, 171–180.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Question concerning Technology" in *Heidegger: Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 339.

<sup>12</sup> Rangka Kala Mahaswa, and Agung Widhianto. "Questioning the 'Anthropos' in the Anthropocene: Is the Anthropocene Anthropocentric?" in *SHS Web of Conferences*, vol. 76, 1-10.

the world purely in terms of subjectivity.<sup>13</sup> To say that a geologic era is completely in the hands of subjective thinking would mean to completely take hold nature as subservient to human rationality – thus looking at its apocalyptic possibility as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Anthropos that can be found on the two terms we are dealing with, however, is not lost. They are simply operationalized in terms of the value and the effect of human beings which also should not be equivocated with each other, just like how the Anthropocene should not be seen merely as anthropocentrism. Yet, Mansueto's synonymous use of the terms Anthropocene and anthropocentrism is not without motivation. His framework in looking at the origin and principles is influenced by the whole premise where the Anthropos conflated with both the geologic era and the ontological structuring of the subject is justified. This premise is what I call the 'logic of recognition' which assumes its legitimacy from the Hegelian notion of dialectics.<sup>14</sup>

### **Against the Logic of Recognition**

Mansueto begins by reiterating the Hegelian notion of dialectics in terms of master-slave relations. He remarks that there happens a reversal of the relations when it comes to technological development where humans "eventually became dependent or enslaved of his creation."<sup>15</sup> Thus, an assumption organically arises here. Following the same logic of recognition between human and its technological activity, objectification becomes a necessary step in this process. In this case of master-slave relations in the light of technological activity, Mansueto associates the latter in relation to consciousness' endeavor of attaining its self-reflexive capability where the technological subject becomes immersed in its objectual reification of its labor. Thus, recognizing the self in a relation where it sees itself as a slave in relation to its object poses a differential ambiguity. It does not find its consciousness to its object. Hegel remarks that self-consciousness is a twofold activity where it finds itself immersed in

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<sup>13</sup> Virgilio Rivas, "The Anthropogenic Takeover of Dual External World" in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 16 no. 1, 316-48.

<sup>14</sup> I borrow this term from Grosz's concept of the politics of recognition. See Elizabeth Grosz, "A politics of imperceptibility: A response to 'Anti-racism, multiculturalism and the ethics of identification'" in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 28 no. 4, 463-472.

<sup>15</sup> Mansueto, "Critical Discourses," 87.

another, as a product of it finding its self-reflexive endeavor.<sup>16</sup> So, the question concerning the technological subject, especially in its ethical dimension, reverts to the Fichtean notion of a world that only acts as a stage for moral activity, since the self in its reflexive capability only sees the object for its own consumption and moral realization. Fichte originally sees this relation as his concept of the ego necessitates willing and posits the counter-willing of its objectual counterpart.<sup>17</sup> If this is the case, then, the process of subjectivation of the technological subject finds itself lost in the translation of a world with its own regulative process, altering and modelling itself even without the subject's nod of approval.

So, the question of technology asserting its dominance in the present geologic regime fails to gain a foothold without the subject's interplay with them, as they are objects that possess no moral dimension. In taking into further consideration the differential ambiguity of human-technological relations as Mansueto puts it, he rightly conjures Heidegger about the dangers of enframing the human in terms of its technological prowess. However, the other side of the coin is that it is not technology itself that is dangerous, it is the enframing or a certain orientation toward a technological signification itself that brings danger about.<sup>18</sup> This, I believe, is caused by the certain methodological principle Mansueto employs: the logic of recognition. In relation to the Anthropocene, however, my case against this logic that permits an ontological configuration rest on the foundation of looking at the Hegelian paradigm of dialectical movement as composed of being and non-being forming a unity of opposites, a harmony between contradictions. This is a clear case of attributing anthropocentrism to the geologic regime as nature resists to be seen as its manifestation. The reason why it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of the Anthropocene is that nature alludes to the idea that even if looking at it in a way that is continually being transformed by human activities and technological progress, these changes are absorbed and rather obscured.

In the logic of recognition, Mansueto implicitly subscribes to what Braidotti calls the 'scholarship of anxiety.'<sup>19</sup> By maintaining the

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<sup>16</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 76.

<sup>17</sup> J.G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 253.

<sup>18</sup> Heidegger, "Question Concerning Technology," 333.

<sup>19</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019) 88.

discourse on the technological subject in the Anthropocene, it turns into a discussion of the dangers of a techno-scientific world precipitated by global capitalism, rather than establishing a posthumanistic understanding of a world in the present geologic regime. I believe the latter should be the case when it comes to determining new means of defining the human in its complexities. Braidotti argues that the posthuman challenge is in forming “new concepts and social imaginaries... not a defensive or nostalgic approach.”<sup>20</sup> In retrospect, Mansueto traces the discourse on the ethical relationship between technology and human beings against the backdrop of Anthropocene. This is not far from the posthuman motivation that seeks to end the opposition between humanism and anti-humanism.<sup>21</sup> This is in line with Mansueto’s argument that “awkwardly to be against technology could also mean to become anti-human in the process.”<sup>22</sup> However, his understanding of human beings’ relation to nature is limited by the very premise of his paper, which rests on subjectivity’s approach to modelling the world based on its own capabilities as a self-reflexive individual.

One example that could be determined from the point I made above is Mansueto’s take on Haraway’s concept of the *cyborg*. It runs the risk of falling into the trap of his principle being that technology is foreign to the human body just like how nonbeing is foreign to being in terms of the Hegelian notion of the dialectical movement. To say that cyborgs are creatures that are simultaneously animal and machine is to not differentiate the two terms but rather combine them in such a way that there is no distinction between what is human and what is a *cyborg*.<sup>23</sup> The cyborg acts merely as a metaphorical signification. Unlike in the logic of recognition which looks at the internality of essences through a negative process, viewing Haraway’s concept must be in terms of its boundaries. As Haraway puts it, the “cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves.”<sup>24</sup> This effectively avoids the hierarchical order that pits human beings and technology against each other, to avoid the unnecessary conflict between the two.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>21</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) 37.

<sup>22</sup> Mansueto, “Critical Discourses,” 92.

<sup>23</sup> Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 67.



The artificiality of things present in technological objects as human-made, should not be made as a point of reference against the naturality of the human body, or even anything natural. To quote Deleuze, “the plane of nature... does not make any distinction at all between things that might be called natural things and things that might be called artificial.”<sup>25</sup> This means that if we are to make a case for the interplay of human beings and nature, we should not have any distinction between the two. I argue here for an immanent ontology, akin to Spinoza’s. Sharp makes a good preemption of posthuman motivation here using Spinoza as the conceptual framework. She argues that by applying Spinoza’s view that humans are not special or superior, we will gain more insight into how we create different ways of understanding reality. To do this, she remarks that there should be no instance that we remove human affairs from the equation involving nature. This means that even at the ideological level, we must treat of human beings’ ideas, concepts, and feelings as the elements at play in our affective constitution.<sup>26</sup> By means of renaturalizing human affairs, we come to understand that there are forces outside our usual perception that evades our recognition, and that there is wisdom brought about by nonhuman agents.<sup>27</sup> Relating this concept to the present geologic regime, the Anthropocene is a planetary configuration that absorbs the anthropocentric activity and makes it its own, leaving the human being lost in search of its identity which clings to an all too human logic of recognition.

At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that I will be moving beyond, and offer an alternative – and probably a possibility of expanding Mansueto’s initial aim of highlighting the discourses on the technological subject in the Anthropocene. I also seek to further ground the ethicality of the question of human-technology relations by appropriating it to the posthuman motivation that gains its legitimacy from Spinoza’s immanent philosophy, primarily to his account of the imagination which I argue as the locus of his ethics.

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<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988), 124.

<sup>26</sup> Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

## The Logic of Immanence

Spinoza's metaphysics of substance adheres to an immanent principle. He sees substance as the only existing thing independent of any cause, which he denotes as God or nature.<sup>28</sup> So, everything that exists is an immanent particular instantiation of what Spinoza conceives as substance. Characterizing his ontology as such presents a completely different understanding of reality. Thus, the logic that is involved here is one that is not characterized by a subject-object orientation aimed at recognizing one's own consciousness, but rather a perception of relations that acts as the determining principle of each existing mode. Spinoza defines mode as a thing "that which exists in something else, through which it is also conceived."<sup>29</sup> As each thing is defined quantitatively through velocity and rest, we come to perceive that we are only creating determinations based on boundaries. Furthermore, since for Spinoza every determination is negation, everything that participates in nature are conceived in a positive manner.<sup>30</sup> Thus, I see the logic of immanence as a plausible response to escape the gaze manifest in the logic of recognition which is negative in nature. That to advance the question of the relation between human beings and technology in the light of Anthropocene Mansueto posited, there should be no instance of the negative and a mediating principle that throws us back to the nostalgia and anxiety of defining what the contemporary technological human subject is.

I already preempted, by using Sharp, the treatment of our affective constitution that includes all the possible things that might affect an individual. This means that in terms of understanding the technological subject, we must look not at the things that blur our definition of what a human being is, but rather at what role it assumes in the dynamic play of itself and in nature. This resonates to the idea of Spinoza that "a compound individual can be affected in many modes and nevertheless preserve its nature."<sup>31</sup> This notion can be expanded into the discussion of the Anthropocene as a whole. As nature is continuously modified and modelled, with or without the subject's nod of approval, it still functions exactly as it is. Nature still exists with its

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<sup>28</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. Clare Carlisle, trans. George Eliot (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 226.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

infinity of modes, only that one particular instantiation of it in the name of *Anthropos* manages to be the primary agent in influencing its affective constitution. By discovering human traces in rock fragmentations thousands of years ago, the imprint of the human marked its being an active force as a mode present in nature just like any other organic and inorganic things. This proves that nature has its own affective constitution just like us, and that we do affect it in a way that actively changes it.

Observing the effects of climate change in the backdrop of the Anthropocene, it undoubtedly gives us feelings of despair, guilt, and anger. However, we must also understand that, as human beings are part of nature as one of its modes, the present geologic regime is not unique in its continuous expression of itself. Beth Lord puts it in a rather beautiful and at the same time destructive way: "humans and our actions are expressions of nature, even when we appear to destroy nature."<sup>32</sup> This, however, does not mean that we must take no responsibility when it comes to asserting ourselves and our destructive actions. Lord argues that for Spinoza, we must rejoice with the thought of our empowerment of the things around us, but only to the extent that it coincides with human flourishing. In this light, the Anthropocene gave us power to extract materials from the earth, produce goods for our benefit, and even explore the depths of the oceans and the vastness of the universe. At the same time, it also leaves us a degraded planet, withering soil, extinct animals, and calamities on a scale that are harmful for us. Recalling Spinoza's notion of human flourishing, these circumstances are contrary to them. Therefore, there should be an understanding that goes beyond us as human beings and towards the things that contribute to nature's affective constitution. As Lord further argues, "to understand that we are part of nature is to better understand our causal role in the changes occurring on Earth."<sup>33</sup> This brings me to assert Spinoza's ethics, primarily to that of the imagination, as the grounding principle when it comes to the ethicality of the relationship between the technological subject and nature in its present geologic configuration.

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<sup>32</sup> Beth Lord, "Even the Anthropocene is nature at work, transforming itself | Aeon Essays." Aeon. April 28, 2020, <https://aeon.co/essays/even-the-anthropocene-is-nature-at-work-transforming-itself>. (Accessed June 5, 2023.)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

## Ethics of the Imagination

Mansueto enthusiastically calls for an emancipatory act of liberation through the technological rationality of the subject.<sup>34</sup> That is, he recognizes the power of negativity in terms of identifying the capability of non-conformity to the capitalist machine. Surely, reason sees the essence of things in its adequate and universal sense – however, it is devoid of any substantial element that brings about its criticality as it stands on its own, lacking in any foundational aspect that expresses its rationality at its ontological configuration. This is why I sought to explore this subject-matter not in light of rationality’s capabilities, but rather on the possibility of integrating new social imaginaries as the foundational aspect for reason to have a strong ground. As rationality is seen as the pinnacle of the contemporary technological subject, imagination at the level of contemplation informed by the vagueness of experience is what gives rationality its authority in terms of its capabilities for ontological, social, political, and even planetary configurations. For Spinoza, imagination is when the mind contemplates things as if it were present at that very moment.<sup>35</sup> It is where the *images of things* become apparent as they contribute to the narratives the mind forms. Here, imagination stands as a receptor of various things that contribute to its affective constitution. Additionally, imagination thinks of things in isolation. Therefore, it thinks things contingently, rather than necessarily – the latter being the task of reason.<sup>36</sup> Intuitively, this notion might be in stark contrast to Spinoza’s immanent philosophy that conceives of nature as a deterministic, necessary whole. Further, as he regards that errors may arise when it comes to imagination as we only determine things through its boundaries, we may contingently and inadequately think a certain ontological disposition of an individual is its nature that can be applied universally as its essence.<sup>37</sup> However, Spinoza does not dismiss it as a kind of cognition that needs to be done away with. Rather, he uses it as a way for an individual’s understanding of the interconnectedness of things in nature as it enriches the mind through experiential encounters of various ideas and things. This is the reason

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<sup>34</sup> Mansueto, “Critical Discourses,” 98.

<sup>35</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 168.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 148.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

why I find Spinoza's concept of imagination as a plausible candidate for rationality to have a strong foundational ground.

Spinoza's philosophy viewed as an ethics of the imagination analyzes an individual's affective constitution as it navigates and learns its place in the interconnectedness of things. Thus, starting from the fascinating concept of imagination, it could then be integrated to the everyday experience of an individual where we can extrapolate even in its pre-reflexive moment as it is already influenced and predisposed to a certain orientation that constitutes to its ontological configuration. This is the reason why I see Spinoza's ethics as not primarily of reason, but rather of the imagination. Since we are susceptible to different experiences that our history, culture, and geography permits us, the responsibility of creating a social configuration of ethical relations falls upon the shoulders of every rational agent, while incorporating each mode of reality and sustaining an ecosystem of immanent relations.

In terms of the present planetary configuration – the Anthropocene, Spinoza provides us with an insightful way of shedding light into a world that is all too human and at the same time an unfamiliar territory of danger and catastrophe. The question of the ethicality of the technological subject diminishes since there is no privilege of the subject to begin with. Rather, the ethics that is framed here are observed in terms of relationality – a connection between things, individuals, and systems of thoughts and bodies. This is the matter developed by contemporary scholars on Spinoza. Particularly Braidotti, who, in conjunction with Deleuze, looks at Spinoza's ethics of joy as that which creates distinctions based on the negative modes of relation and affirmative ones.<sup>38</sup> By means of understanding relations based on its affirmative capabilities, ethics functions as a spectacle for perceiving existing structures, dissecting what causes sad affects or painful configurations. In turn, it creates new ones that do not include such affections and configurations to advance the ethicality of the contemporary human subject. At the level of social configuration of ethical relations, Negri asserts that it is the moment when the will meets the intellect to arrive at a new politics – one that is hopeful and is representative of a collective endeavor.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, 95.

<sup>39</sup> Antonio Negri, *Spinoza: Then and Now*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge and Medford: Polity, 2017), 73.

Yet, this politics of hope is not the endpoint in the theater of human affairs. It is still but one expression of nature's various modes of reality. There should still be the recognition of the technological individual as it does not lose its subjectivation in its collective effort. As Balibar points out, an individual should be seen as a *transindividual* in Spinoza's ontology of relations to properly understand the signification of things within a wider context of Spinoza's metaphysics. For him, an individual's ontological configuration naturally includes political predication. But for it to happen, there must be a translation of the ontological into the political by necessitating it, and at the same time for the ontological to have political predication, it must be practiced on that territory.<sup>40</sup> Here, imagination assumes a bigger role as it bridges the gap between an individual's political instantiations and translates it into reason's ontological configuration.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, I will briefly reiterate the arguments I made in the previous sections of this paper. First, I argue that the Anthropocene is not anthropocentrism since the former is a formal signification of the Earth's geologic stratigraphy that shows the power of humanity to alter its geological configuration. It should not be confused with anthropocentrism which is a rational subject's ontological disposition towards its world. Second, I made the case against the logic of recognition by pointing out that the primary cause of the said confusion is in recognizing the subjectivity's effort in modelling the world based on its own capacity as a self-reflexive individual. Third, I attempted to present Spinoza's logic of immanence as a way out of the logic of recognition by presenting the technological subject's immanent relations with its human and nonhuman ecologies. Lastly, with ethics of the imagination, I reformulated the question of ethicality of the rational technological subject by turning to imagination as the foundational aspect for reason to have a proper and adequate understanding of its contemporary predicament – the Anthropocene.

From the points made above, it should be clear by now that the synthesis with nature is a challenge that only presents itself when looking at the world in terms of a subject-object orientation. By

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<sup>40</sup> Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza, the Transindividual*, trans. Mark. G. E. Kelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) 8-9.

protruding to an idea that is nostalgic to a geologic regime of the distant past while maintaining a dialectical approach of master-slave relations, the Anthropocene becomes a clear case of anthropocentrism, attributing human subjectivity into a world that simply resists to be subjugated. Alternative to this is by thinking the world in terms of the logic of immanence, we regard ourselves as natural part of various ecologies and systems, often crossing and overlapping multiple boundaries – where the question of naturality and artificiality is not a question at all. Thus, optimistically through the ethics of the imagination, we dispel the anxiety, guilt, and hopelessness in the present geologic regime by understanding that the power we possess is one that allows us to become active participants in nature, rather than passive observers in it.

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