Elizabeth Grosz. *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism*. Columbia University Press 2017. 336 pp. $35.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780231181624); $24.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780231181631).

> 'The future is merely real, without being actual;
> whereas *the past is a nexus of actualities*.' A.N. Whitehead

The uncovering of novel thought or innovative paths of thinking within philosophy's history has always been a necessary task, but one that bears with it a fair degree of both precariousness and risk. The precariousness lies in delicate positioning of a *new* dialogue that truly reads across established histories and narratives—getting the past to speak in unrevealed but meaningful ways is an almost magical act that combines prestidigitation and necromancy in equal measure. Risk: the desiccation of the act of thinking into an academic embalming—and philosophy as an act of forensics. Restructuring, reweaving the past to produce new occasions for thought is thus fraught but is also a philosophical imperative, and it is a duty that Elizabeth Grosz undertakes with virtuosity in *The Incorporeal*.

Attempting to situate a third space of ontic and ethical possibility—one that is neither dualist nor monist—is the objective of this volume. In part a response to the rise of the new materialism of which Grosz herself was a leading exponent, *The Incorporeal* outlines 'an understanding of the world as material-ideal as incorporeal openness' (14), a paraconsistent attempt to 'conceptualize materiality without reducing its ideal dimensions, a way to think thought through and in its material arrangements' (12). The topography here is familiar, but the sequencing is unusual. Grosz starts with the Stoics and carries through Spinoza and Nietzsche. Following this, Deleuze is set before Gilbert Simondon and Raymond Ruyer. As the reader will come to appreciate, the placement—the arrangement—of this philosophical assemblage is critical to the success of the project. This 'alternative philosophical genealogy of the incorporeal' (18) elucidates the impossibility of any simplistic division of the material from the ideal, whether binary or reductive.

The Stoics provide a first, important counter-narrative opposing the matter/idea divide. It is in these fragments that many of the key concepts that fired the irreductive approaches of later thinkers were first established. Fundamental to the onto-ethics of the incorporeal is the Stoic concept of causality and the *corporeality* of causes—'causes are the reasons for a process, state or event, even if what they produce are, apparently paradoxically, not bodies' (26). What causes produce (the concept of 'effect' is not one in the Stoic lexicon) are incorporeals, chief among which are void, space, time and lekton (31). Void is 'the openness that enables bodies and their qualities to abide in place' (35); it is deeply connected to the concepts of place (topos) and room (chora) as the possibility for some *thing* to be some *where*. Time is understood as the capacity of change in movement. Sayables, or *lekta*, are the possibility of predication, the grains, as it were, of the event of meaning. Within this schema, Stoic ethics emerge as a 'form of self-regulation and self-production,' but one that is articulated along a deeply ontological path—living well as living in accordance with nature. But the Stoics are canny: due to the openness of the incorporeals, they manage to assert fate while avoiding determinism—'destiny comes from the unending chain of causes, but it is the incorporeal... that affirms freedom, the collapse of necessity or the determined' (50). It should be noted that the fragmentary nature of Stoic texts leads to some level of friction here as Grosz works to systematize a rather loose aggregate, sorites style. Ultimately, what is produced are a series of extremely useful tools as opposed to a singular vision.

Grosz then turns to Spinoza, and provides a tour-de-force interpretation of the incorporeal in the *Ethics.* This is a masterful, impeccably clear reading that re-emphasizes the radical power of Spinoza's thought, that 'irreducible and creative incoherence or excess in Spinoza's monism that, while it advocates one order, one universe, one reason, nevertheless articulates an excess that cannot be directly accommodated or reduced to the One' (58). What Grosz captures best here, while underscoring the trajectory of the incorporeal, is the geometric elegance of the *Ethics*. From substance and attributes, to modes affects and powers, the power of Spinoza's thought lies in the ultimate worldliness and practical wisdom it imparts through its consideration of necessity and the meaning of freedom, which 'consists in understanding necessity, the necessity that causes my own existence and the whole of existence that I require, directly or indirectly, to persist in my being' (90).

Grosz's archaeology of the incorporeal in Nietzsche is similarly excellent. The line from Spinoza to Nietzsche is remarkably clear, but what Nietzsche extracts and titrates from that source, as Grosz illustrates, is extraordinary, providing us with 'an updated and transformed immanence, a single ever recurring, continually changing universe with nothing else beyond it and thus also nothing new in it, while paradoxically, each being must create itself and live up to its fate as artfully as it can' (96). From his de-deification of nature and naturalization of humanity (108) through the transvaluation of values and emergence of the overman and the physics of the will, Nietzsche moves us toward the heaviness of eternal return and the foundational importance of *amor fati* in cultivating an incorporeal onto-ethics. Again, as with our earlier thinkers 'we must not confuse fate with causation' (121). But more importantly, for Nietzsche, 'like will, fate is a direction or orientation, and like will, it must be understood as an incorporeal or ideal direction or orientation the force of a cohesive trajectory, cohesive not prospectively... but only ever retrospectively in terms of the causes (wills) that activate other wills, a more specified and singular focus' (121).

The influence of Deleuze on Grosz's thought is difficult to overstate, and her command of the full Deleuzian apparatus is evident in this book. The focus here is on ethics within the plane of immanence, 'based on a knowledge of the implications and consequences of living a life here, in this world, with its own forces with which ours are bound up' (132). Grosz clearly delineates Deleuze's virtuality of 'could' from any prescriptive 'should'—the plane of immanence here is the plane of *expressibility.* Here, the plane of immanence is one of consistency, 'the order in which all ideas take place, the "place" where one concept can encounter another, enhance or diminish it, and which other concepts must attain in order to engage in the domain of concepts'(137). For Deleuze, it is the intersection of entities such as concepts, affects, percepts and prospects across a series of planes that creates 'potentials for a particular type of autonomous existence, the existence of concepts, of affects and percepts *in themselves'* (138). The plane of immanence is a sine qua non example of Grosz's incorporeality as it resides 'between the impulse to transcendence and the forces of dissolution amidst chaos... frames and orients philosophy as active thought, existing in impersonal and incorporeal concepts, freed from their origins, capable of directing a movement of thought' (148). This opens the space for a Deleuzian ethics, which 'affirms... a life that maximizes its engagements with chaos... that supports, informs and extends itself through the creative inventions that all forms of life add back to this chaos, whether it is sustained and given life on the planes of consistency or whether such inventions are destined to return to the chaos from which they were formed' (167).

The strange but critical nature of Grosz's alternate timeline emerges in the next two chapters, on Simondon and Ruyer respectively, both of whom inspired a series of key concepts in Deleuze's work. It is only reading them restrospectively through the lens of Deleuze that allows the figure of the incorporeal in their work to become clear. Simondon's importance lies in part on his emphasis

on *ontogenesis* over *ontology*: how what is comes to be. Crucial to this is his notion of the pre-individual, which is at once radically simple and deeply sophisticated: 'insofar as an individual exists, there must be a process, or many, that produces it' (171). The preindividual is a metastable entity, neither one nor zero—it is 'indeterminately more than one' (172). In Simondon's topology of being, there are a series of ontogenetic 'leaps' in complexity between different orders of individuation, all brought about through metastable excess. Living individuals are a particularly complex process of individuation, 'a system of individuation, and individuating system and a system individuating itself: internal resonance and the translation of the relation to itself into information are in this system of the living' (182). What is most interesting here, however, is the figure of the transindividual, which acts as a sort of rupture within collective individuation in which the preindividual re-emerges. It is 'the preindividual in touch with its own potentials for creation and thus with the potentials for new kinds of psychic and collective life' (193). The transindividual subject deindividuates by withdrawing from collective life to redefine itself, life, the collective, and through this gesture, becomes the core of Simondon's ethics: 'Ethics expresses the sense of perpetual individuation the stability of becomes which is that of being as preindividual individuating itself and tending toward the continuity which reconstructs under a form of organized communication a reality as vast as the predindividual system. Through the individual, amplificatory transfer coming from Nature, societies become a World' (208).

Raymond Ruyer's work is only now becoming available to English readership (*Neofinalism* was published in 2016), so Grosz's introduction here is particularly valuable. Ruyer's anti-Platonic concept of primary form, of the absolutely open monad 'composed entirely of windows and doors, of openings, a being that enfolds into its inside what is outside' (212) forms the basis of his peculiar ontology. These forms 'have the characteristics of a field that brings into being connections that are regulated internally rather than added together externally, and whose internal bonds, while 'invisible' are always in immediate contact with one other' (223). The transspatial arrangements through which these fields articulate themselves he calls 'mnemic themes,' 'patterns or melodies, cohesions or consistencies through which primary forms develop themselves according to their nature, forms that generate that nature' (226). These themes 'produce forms, directions, means for the processes of materialization that, through autoaffection, create bodies, activities which, in their turn, create things, ensembles of things, relations between living and nonliving things' (243). This leads to a curious, almost mystical teleology in Ruyer in which '*the future itself* may be the destination, the finality, ever deferred, or true form, what it directs its self-making towards' (247).

This book is a wide-ranging and deep engagement that provides a lucid, expert guide to conceiving the possibility of the incorporeal alongside these thinkers. While I feel that Ruyer may be something of an ill-fit in this assemblage of conceptual personae, my only substantive complaint is a wish that Grosz had included a longer concluding chapter with a more fulsome discussion of future directions. That being said, there is an excellent embracing of a Western nondual form of thought here, and it represents a work of original and powerful philosophical thinking. Grosz has created the momentum in this volume for a robust evolutionary shift beyond the new materialism while integrating its most important insights.

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