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Deeply Ecological Deleuze and Guattari: Humanism's Becoming-Animal

Introduction. In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari from within animal studies, particularly in the chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) entitled “1730 — Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible....” This is not surprising perhaps — Alain Badiou, whose own philosophy is resolutely anthropocentric, has criticized Deleuze and Guattari for having produced what he considers to be an ignoble “animal” philosophy.¹ Recent examples of such texts which, albeit from a variety of viewpoints and in varying degrees of depth, engage specifically with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “becoming-animal” include *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (2000) by Akira Mizuta Lippit, Steve Baker’s *The Postmodern Animal* (2000), James Urpeth’s essay “Animal Becomings” in *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings of Continental Thought* (2004), Donna Haraway’s *When Species Meet* (2008), *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Insects and Technology* (2010) by Jussi Parikka, and Susan McHugh’s *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (2011).

One of the main reasons for this interest is that, famously or infamously, Deleuze and Guattari appear to give to nonhuman animals an access to a “becoming” that is equal — in power, in affect — to those valorized becomings open to the human animal: “[A]ffects and powers,” they write, “grip every animal in a becoming just as [non moins] powerful as that of the human being with the animal” (*Thousand Plateaus* 266). As I will demonstrate, however, upon closer reading it soon transpires that the equality marked by that “just as” is just as quickly refused. Indeed, in being “just as” or “no less” [*non moins*] powerful, an implicit division between a nonhuman animal-becoming and a human becoming-animal is already marked. This will in turn enable a better understanding of the politics underlying the drawing of a rigorous division between the categories of the wild and the tame — a politics which ultimately derails the ethical and reiterates instead structures of oppression that are at once traditional and contemporary.

Treating animals. Before we can approach the discontinuity between human and animal, however, a discontinuity which in fact serves to *prohibit* nonhuman becoming despite its commensurate powerfulness, it is first of all necessary to consider Deleuze and Guattari’s division of all nonhuman animals into three categories: Oedipal animals,

State animals, and demonic animals. Oedipal animals are “individuated animals, family pets, sentimental,” whereas State animals are those animals treated so as “to extract from them series or structures, archetypes or models.” Finally, the valorized category of demonic animals are those “pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale [*à meutes et affects, et qui font multiplicité, devenir, population, conte*]” (265).

These three categories, however — Oedipal, State, and pack — are far less secure and far more complex than is generally taken to be the case. To begin with, these divisions are divisions only of degree and of contingency:

There is always the possibility that a given animal ... will be treated as a pet [*soit traité comme un animal familier*] ... it is also possible for any animal to be treated [*être traité*] in the mode of the pack ... Even the cat, even the dog. ... Yes, any animal is or can be a pack, but to varying degrees of vocation that make it easier or harder to discover the multiplicity, or multiplicity-grade [*de teneur en multiplicité*], an animal contains (actually or virtually according to the case). (265-6)

Moreover, we can see that what have been thus divided are not “actual” nonhuman animals. The categories denote, that is to say, neither a zoological classification nor even what for Deleuze and Guattari constitutes the reality of nonhuman animals, as we shall see. Rather, the three categories represent the three possible ways in which nonhuman animals might be *treated* [*traité*], that is, in which they might be constituted *in relation to humans*: a dog can be treated as a pack, a panther can be treated *as* a “pet” or *as* a model. In short, Oedipal, State, and demonic are not three ways of being-animal, but rather three ways in which humans may produce other animals. We are thus contained within an (actual or virtual) *human* domain, constrained within the anthro-tropo-logical machine of human recognition and of the proper and improper ways of re-presenting a nonhuman being. Whether that is *as* a “pet” or *as* a “pack,” this exceptional tropological function, this uniquely human capacity to constitute something as something, is itself symptomatic of an all too familiar human-animal discontinuity founded upon the possession of language being awarded to human animals alone.

What then, do Deleuze and Guattari consider the “reality” of nonhuman animals, outside of their categorization? Only in answering this question does it become possible to understand the privilege accorded to the category of the demonic, a category which, first of all, is not in fact that of a band or pack of *animals* (plural). Rather, for Deleuze and Guattari the animal — that is, *this* singular animal, this nonsubstitutable living being more commonly defined as a single, autonomous organism — is always already pack: “We do not wish to say that certain animals live in packs [*vivent en meutes*] ... What we are saying is that every animal is fundamentally [*d’abord*] a band, a pack” (264). “The pack,” they continue, is “animal reality” (267). In other words, every individuated nonhuman animal is, first of all, is *at first* [*d’abord*], a pack. This is “its” mode, “its” way of being rather than simply a quality or a distinguishing *mark*: “it [*sic*] has pack modes, rather than characteristics, even if further distinctions interior to these modes are called for” (264, translation modified).

Every nonhuman animal thus “is” in a mode of being-pack, rather than “pack” being simply or only a *mark* — constituted by an human-animal relation — *of* and *as* “animal reality.” Every animal *is* a pack then, but not every animal is treated *as* a pack. In being treated or constituted *as* an Oedipal or State animal, this being-pack that an animal contains is rendered merely “virtual” in that her “multiplicity-grade” is necessarily hard to discover. By contrast, those animals constituted as demonic pack-animals, insofar as the metaphorical vehicle that is such a relation properly signifies, or at least corresponds to, the essential “reality” of nonhuman animals, therefore retain *in and as that relation* the “actuality,” the sense, of their “proper” way of being. It is just such a “vocation” that keeps them at the greatest distance both from their domestication by way of “petty” human “sentimentality” and from the reduction to state characteristics. A proper vocation, in short, which ensures that they remain both “wild” and “real.”

The reason for this demonic propriety is that pack animals, in contrast to both the pet and the model, form a multiplicity that presupposes *contagion* rather than filiation and *involutions* rather than hereditary production and sexual reproduction. “Bands,” Deleuze and Guattari write, both “human and animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes” (266). However, it is in following this catastrophic contagion or contamination that we discover, in what is perhaps the central passage of the “1730” plateau, the positing of an absolute separation:

These multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain *assemblages* [*agencements*]; it is there that human beings effect their becomings-animal [*opère ses devenirs-animaux*].... The

pack is simultaneously animal reality and the reality of the becoming-animal of the human being; contagion is simultaneously animal populating [*peuplement animal*], and propagation of the animal populating [or “stocking”] of the human being [*et propagation du peuplement animal de l’homme*] (267, translation modified).

Being-pack therefore *is* the reality of the animal, the way of being of animals is the entering of assemblages by the contagion that is animal populating. At the same time, the pack *is* the reality of human *becoming*-animal, in contrast to *being*-human, insofar as the human being can *effect* [*opère*] a becoming-animal by *entering* the being-pack of a certain assemblage that is a contagion which propagates or passes over the animal populating of the human. The way of being-pack that is animal populating can, in other words, be passed on or over to human beings, enabling them to *enter* the assemblages that *effect* their becoming. Only in this way can the human being become animal. This is not to say, however, that the human enters the *reality* of the animal. Rather, as we shall see, this “reality” of every other animal remains absolutely discontinuous with human being.

The human privilege of becoming-animal. Despite their scorn for “ridiculous evolutionary classifications à la [Konrad] Lorenz, according to which there are inferior packs and superior societies” (264), Deleuze and Guattari not only reduce *all* other animals to the general category of “the animal” in opposition to “the human” (albeit while calling for further “internal” differentiation), they in fact place human culture over against “the true Nature [*la vraie Nature*]” of every other living being. This “true Nature” — the totality of “[u]nnatural participations” of *nonhuman* becoming — “spans the kingdoms of nature” (266-7, translation modified). Becoming, in other words, the entering of assemblages by contagion, is the reality of nonhuman being. “Each multiplicity,” they write, “is symbiotic; its becoming ties together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy” (275). Thus, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari “the human” retains the potential to *enter* *becomings*-animal (which is not an animal becoming), the nonhuman animal “exists” in a *permanent* becoming, “in” this “truly natural” mode of being-pack that “is” the cosmological One-All of Life.

It thus follows that the human is always already outside of the “true Nature” of permanent becoming. Consequently, as we shall see, humans are necessarily

condemned to the “stupidity [*bêtise*]” of language, and henceforth to relating to animals as animals, be that *as* Oedipal, *as* State, or *as* demonic. We are now better placed to understand the valorization — the higher degree — of the demonic *as* category, insofar as the determination of the categorical animal predicate relates only to *human entry*, or its refusal. Always already outside of “Nature,” the human being nevertheless comes to *approach* true Nature from which it is disposed through an anthropomorphic *positing* of the demonic. In other words, the metaphorical relation—the *as* such which at once remarks the displacement of the human from Nature — between the “demonic” and the multiplicity-grade that “is” the reality of animals performs and, in so doing *discloses*, its discontinuity from human being. A disclosure, moreover, which is at once the possibility of *entering* a properly *human* becoming.

This opposition between becoming and being, in a vertiginous oscillation between figure and figured, is represented on the one side by the “demonic” wolf and on the other by the molarized Oedipal dog. Whereas even *within* the anthropomorphising relation the wolf retains, in her distance from the molarized human, her essence as an “actual” animal, the essential reality of the dog has, by contrast, become merely virtual, and has become so as a result of “contamination” by a properly human iterability and thus temporality.

Moreover, it is this oscillation, this undecidability, which permits the making-virtual of the reality of an animal *in relation to the human*: dogs *can* be pack in that they *are* pack, but *as* (anthropomorphic molarized) dogs this being-pack is effaced. An effacement that ensures the impossibility of disclosing a potential *human* becoming by way of an encounter with an Oedipal or State animal. A dog, however, *this* nonsubstitutable dog, *has* pack as his or her way of being, a reality which as such cannot be expropriated without her ceasing to be a dog. Without, in other words, this dog ceasing to be nonhuman and thus becoming human instead—an impossible expropriation within Deleuze and Guattari’s human-animal division. For Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, the question of the animal is always and only a question of how “animals” are *treated* (*traité*) within a discourse that remains essentially human.

Given the contempt displayed by Deleuze and Guattari for “actual” so-called “pets,” however, it would nonetheless seem that the proximity to the human *does* somehow, albeit impossibly, impinge upon the way of being-animal. An anthropomorphism made literal, made *flesh*, so to speak, dogs and cats are thus somehow humanized *in spite of* their essential becoming. Within the reading being attempted here, however, *both* the “tame” and the “wild” are necessarily pure anthropomorphisms, a hierarchical ranking

only in relation to the potential disclosure of *human* becoming. Nonetheless, this division of a putatively homogeneous “animal reality” solely for human purposes—as the *means* of a theoretical disclosure of human *ends* — has devastating results for those nonsubstitutable living beings who fall outside of the valorized category. Such contempt for the “pet” and, to an even greater extent, for those unmarked categories of “instrumentalized” animals such as cows and sheep and of those undomesticable animals who inhabit the domestic such as foxes and rats, *thus amounts to a simple prejudice for the victim of its own posited schema.*

Insofar as it discloses — as a purely anthropocentric concern — becoming *as such*, with “the Animal is pack” the entire economy of Deleuze and Guattari’s becomings thus finds its center. Becomings-animal, they write, “are segments occupying a median region. On the near side, we encounter becomings-women, becomings-child ... On the far side, we find becoming-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible” (274). *Between the betweens* in that it occupies the privileged place of entry, such a placing necessarily cannot be a horizontal measure of closeness or distance to the molarized human being. At the same time, however, insofar as the undifferentiated “existence” of nonhuman animals “is” permanent becoming, neither can it be positioned along a vertical hierarchy.² There can, in short, be neither measure nor order because nonhuman being *is* becoming—a permanent becoming, moreover, which is at once the paradox of *timeless stasis* in that there can be no rupture, no revolutionary coming to be in its absolute dissolution. In other words, a nonhuman animal cannot come to be *other* because “the animal” is becoming. Being human, therefore, is to reserve for itself alone the potential for becoming other, for which “animal reality” provides the entry and the *vehicle*.

Becoming-animal is thus for Deleuze and Guattari an *essentially* human affair. Having nothing to do with animals, becoming is rather a uniquely human property: the *becoming* human of human *being*. Furthermore, for Deleuze and Guattari “the Animal” — and indeed, “the true Nature” that is the totality of nonhuman being, of the One-All of Life — is *a priori* excluded from this circular movement going from anthropojection to point of entry that is access to the being of becoming from within the molarized everyday. Here then, we discover a similar structural disavowal, albeit substituting “becoming” for “knowing,” as that which for Heidegger gives to the human Dasein alone both the “*possibility* of existence” and “a positive possibility of the

most primordial kind of knowing" (*Being and Time* 62, 195). The "demonic" animal in this sense provides for Deleuze and Guattari their own point of departure. And yet, it still remains to ask, how is a *permanent* becoming possible? How do such becomings *take* place, yet without *making* sense?

It is here that we find a certain hesitancy when, in their discussion of Lévi-Strauss, Deleuze and Guattari raise the question of what, or who, an animal comes to *be* in becoming: "Lévi-Strauss is always encountering these rapid acts by which a human becomes animal at the same time as the animal becomes ... (Becomes what? Human, or something else?)" (*Thousand Plateaus* 262). Given the reality of permanent nonhuman becoming, the question necessarily remains unanswerable. "Becoming," they write, "produces nothing other than itself" (262). However, in the pure potentiality that is permanent becoming, nothing can be produced (or, rather, reproduced) in that it necessarily consists of the suspension and withholding of all actualized possibilities, and is thus precisely that which an "I" — as actualized possibility — can never experience. And indeed, as will become clear, it is specifically this "I" that is refused by Deleuze and Guattari to all but human being, thus dissolving nonhuman being within the impossibility of possibility.³

In summary, as both entry and model for becoming, animals initially appear as valorized above the human animal, and yet this is a would-be valorization, which takes the very thing being valorized away from nonhuman animals and reserves it for the human alone. Animals remain suspended in the senseless undifferentiation of an ahistorical stasis, a permanent fluid (non)assemblage of eternal (non)becoming.

Animals, in other words, lack the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space. In contrast, it is only the time-bound human — time-bound in being disposed outside the "true Nature" that is perpetual becoming — who can thus *enter into* an assemblage. "The human" *becomes*, that is, only at the borderline between "being-human" and "true Nature." Hence, the human comes into being at and as the limit of finite "human being" and infinite being *as such*, on the border between the possible and the impossibility of possibility. In becoming, write Deleuze and Guattari, "the demon[ic] functions as the borderline of an animal pack into which the human being passes or *on which* his or her becoming takes place, by contagion" (272, emphasis added). Here, Deleuze and Guattari are once again differentiating between the contagion that is "animal populating" and the "*propagation*" of the "animal populating of the human being" (267). Between, that is to say, the way of being of nonhuman animals and at once that *on which* human becoming takes place. Here, then, there is an

absolute discontinuity between Man and Nature, with the latter the eternal background *upon which*, at the border, human animals alone can affect their becomings-other by way of the demonic.

Deeply ecological Deleuze and Guattari. This distinction between humanity and true Nature thus places Deleuze and Guattari's project in proximity with the definitions of "wild nature" as posited by deep ecologists such as Arne Naess, George Sessions, and Bill Devall.⁴ Such deep ecological representations of nature have, however, increasingly come under attack for proposing what is seen by many to be a rather naive and nonreflexive essentialism. Anthropologist and philosopher Barbara Noske, for example, argues that deep ecological ideas of nature —

tend to be part of a wilderness ethic which totally overlooks sentient individuals in favor of species, collections of species and habitats of species. Deep ecologists give narrow and essentialist definitions of nature. The only nature worth talking about is wild. As a result, domesticated nature, feral nature, or anything which does not constitute "the wild" — including humans themselves — tends to be disqualified as nature. *It is not the real thing...* For deep ecology the dichotomy between humanity and nature is final (*Beyond Boundaries* xi, emphasis added).

While there is an argument to be made that Noske's representation of deep ecology is itself rather narrow and essentializing, it is nonetheless important to note that she is concerned here not with individual viewpoints, but rather with what she considers — quite correctly — to be a general tendency of deep ecological representations of nature. Indeed, it is this tendency which, insofar as it remains largely unexamined by the practitioners of deep ecology themselves, often results in a somewhat naive discourse insofar as it remains blind to its own presuppositions. In Devall and Sessions's foundation text *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (1985), for instance, we find innumerable casual references to an apparent human/Nature dichotomy that is at other times explicitly refused (nor is it insignificant that "Nature" is capitalized throughout). The essence of deep ecology, for example, is at one point defined as "to keep asking more searching questions about human life, society, and Nature as in the Western philosophical tradition of Socrates" (65). In short, while not all deep ecologists would suggest that the dichotomy between humanity and nature is final or absolute, the

simultaneous reliance on this binary as an organizational tool at the very least suggests a certain blindness as to fundamental presuppositions revealed by the use of language itself.

Similarly, Noske's critique of deep ecology as tending toward a deeply romanticized view of "the wild" is difficult to refute. Turning to Devall and Sessions' *Deep Ecology* once again, we discover an admiring, large-print citation of an obscure text by Henry David Thoreau which reads: "Life consists of wildness. The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued in man, its presence refreshes him.... There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature. In short, all good things are wild and free" (qtd. 109). The wilderness, write Devall and Sessions, is for deep ecologists a "sacred space" of "free-flowing Nature" within which humans may seek "communion with wild animals" (111-112). Indeed, the earth itself must be viewed as a "resource that sustains our humanity" (111).

Remaining with our specific focus, however, one can already begin to understand why a reading of Deleuze, with or without Guattari, which aligns his project with that of deep ecology is not necessarily a misreading. Most telling, perhaps, is the familiar deep ecologist argument, put forward at various times by Baker Brownell, Paul Shepard, and others, which claims that "humans need wild animals in their natural habitat to model themselves after and become fully human; domesticated pets and farm animals provide pathetically inadequate substitutes" (172). Robert Hurley, however, detects the connection even in Deleuze's early text *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970), claiming that Deleuze in fact offers a model thus far lacking in deep ecologist "modalities of interaction" ("Introduction" ii).

With a clear reference to Deleuze's later work with Guattari, Hurley describes this model as "the composition of affective relations between individuals, together with the 'plane of consistency' *on which* they interact, that is, their 'environment'" (ii, emphasis added). While this notion of "individuals" (inter)acting *on* or *upon* their "environment" already suggests a very traditional dichotomy, Hurley touches on the specific problematic being traced here when he affirms that this environment is "not just a reservoir of information ... but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing. In a *human* sense, it can be called the unconscious, or at least the ground *on which* the unconscious is constructed" (ii). Here then, the unconscious is the properly human, and is constructed *upon* the (natural) environment.

I will return to this notion of the Deleuzian unconscious in a moment, but first let us further consider some points of crossover between Deleuze and Guattari's process philosophy and the prescriptive discourse of deep ecology. As we have seen, for Deleuze and Guattari as for Hurley "true Nature" is relegated to a timeless background of permanent becoming from which only humans are excluded and that, in being *entered* in those exceptional encounters Deleuze and Guattari call *becomings*, can only ever be written *upon*. Compare this with Arne Naess's claim that the higher understanding characterizing the deep ecological perspective is a direct consequence of encounters between "Nature" and individual human beings. During these exceptional encounters, the habitual sense of one's being an individual, windowless monad breaks down, giving way to an experience of the unlimited that Naess describes as "*oceanic*," and which Deleuze and Guattari call absolute deterritorialization. By way of such encounters, the limitations of human being are overcome, the experience of the oceanic allowing the human, in Naess's well-known phrase, to "think like a mountain." Here, then, could we not also say that the deterritorialized oceanic opens the possibility of "*becomings-mountain*"?⁵

In the opposite direction, one can similarly detect something of deep ecology's "macho ethic" in the structure of Deleuze and Guattari's *becomings*, insofar as nonhuman animals provide the actively human *entry* into becoming, effecting itself *upon* the receptacle that is true Nature in what is at once a masculine, phallicized penetration and (be)coming over of the exoticized timeless wild.⁶ Man never exists-in-relation with other animals, but rather and necessarily *enters* a presumably feminine Nature *from* outside. Here, we find the same essentialist romantic *topos* that organizes both Aldo Leopold's liberalist "land-ethic" (a touchstone discourse for deep ecology) and the deep ecological defense of hunting.⁷

Returning now to Robert Hurley's reading of the Deleuzian unconscious, we find that Hurley merely reaffirms without question the decentering of consciousness by the unconscious as a uniquely human property. Indeed, it is exactly this traditional exceptionalism which "grounds" Deleuze's relegation of infinitely diverse nonhuman worlds to that of a homogeneous timeless background.⁸ It is thus far from incidental that, in his reading of the place of *bêtise* ("stupidity") in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, philosopher Jacques Derrida discloses the Deleuzian unconscious as being "inconsistent."⁹ For Deleuze, as Derrida shows, *bêtise* is "a problem of thinking" that is

proper to man alone, indissociable from its relation to individuation as such which operates — as the groundless ground (*Ungrund*) — beneath all forms (“Transcendental ‘Stupidity’” 49). Animals, by contrast, “are in a sense forewarned [*en quelque sorte prémunis*] against this ground, protected by their explicit forms” (Deleuze *Difference and Repetition* 190, qtd. in Derrida “Transcendental ‘Stupidity’” 51). It is only the human, therefore, who “remains nevertheless as an undetermined freedom in relation with this groundless ground, and that’s where [a] properly human stability comes from” (“Transcendental ‘Stupidity’” 56).

Proceeding to put this distinction into question from both sides, Derrida argues, first, for the necessity of a *nonhuman* relation to this ground that is “as abyssal as with man,” and second, as to the impossibility of an absolute distinction between explicit(animal) and implicit(human) forms. In so doing, he ultimately discloses the very traditional gesture underlying the Deleuzian human-animal distinction: that of the properly human capacity to constitute itself as an “I,” and thus of the identity of *bêtise* and “the thing of the I, of the ego” (58). Thus, writes Deleuze,

Stupidity is neither the ground nor the individual, but rather this relation in which individuation brings the ground to the surface without being able to give it form (this ground rises by means of the I, penetrating deeply into the possibility of thought and constituting the unrecognized in every recognition) (*Difference and Repetition* 190, qtd. in Derrida “Transcendental ‘Stupidity’” 57)

Nonhuman animals, however, cannot be excluded from this “transcendental stupidity” that constitutes “the unrecognized in every recognition,” in that such a *bêtise* is precisely that of the *trace*: the double movement of protention and retention that marks technicity at and as the origin of all living being and haunts every idealization through which a being makes sense.¹⁰

The fault. Central here is the structure of iterability, which can be equally described as the indissociability of the taking place and the having taken place that is this “relation in which individuation brings the ground to the surface without being able to give it form” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 190), and as the “phenomenological fold ... that separates being from appearing. The appearing of being, as such, as phenomenality of its phenomenon, is and is not the being that appears” (Derrida, “Spectres of Marx” 181-2). Refused to nonhuman animals by Deleuze in 1968, the very same refusal of the iterability of the trace remains to organize Deleuze and Guattari’s human-animal

distinction in *A Thousand Plateaus*.¹¹ By way of the wild-tame dichotomy, Deleuze and Guattari reserve for humanity alone the possibility of encountering the timeless immediacy of “true Nature” at and as the limit of language. Moreover, they posit an undying and undifferentiated preoriginary domain of animality — an essential dissolution of Life which renders as senseless the singular deaths of nonhuman animals. And finally, Deleuze and Guattari exclude from the “truth” of “Nature” all of the nonhuman beings improperly contaminated by the anthro-tropo-logical machine of human recognition.

Insofar as for Deleuze and Guattari nonhuman animals exist in permanent becoming, we can now understand why they *must* leave open the question of who or what a nonhuman animal becomes in becoming. Insofar as an animal cannot *become* human, which is *the exception from, and the lack of*, the eternal becoming that is the reality of the animal, she or he can therefore never become *anything* or *anyone* at all. Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari an animal — *this* dog or *that* wolf — is never an “I,” never a “who” or even a “what,” never a “he” or a “she” or an “it.” Furthermore, “the human” may *enter* a (properly human) becoming only because he or she is excluded from the reality of the animal, an exceptionalism which presupposes the constitution of the human in originary lack. It is this “lack” that, insofar as it constitutes the plane of transcendence, reserves the possibility of human becomings-animal or, better, of becoming-*other* than human *being* (cellular, molecular, etc.). In short, the human, and the human alone, is constituted in and as the lack that is *bêtise*, in and as the unrecognizable, the *méconnaissance*, which exceeds all recognition.

In being refused entry into language and thus finitude, nonhuman ways of being thus lack everything predicated upon this properly human lack: not only technics, language, time, and historicity, but also society, politics, ethics, law, and historiology.¹² This notion of an originary human lack is, of course, very familiar, belonging as it does to what Derrida calls “the tried and true biblical and Promethean tradition” (*The Animal* 122). That we should discover this tradition as supporting the valorization of the wild in writers who otherwise work with such originality and creativity to interrupt that very tradition is perhaps not that surprising, however. As Derrida writes, one finds “the same dominant” throughout Western philosophical discourse, “the same recurrence of a schema that is in truth invariable” (45). A schema, Derrida continues, in which —

what is proper to man, his subjugating superiority over the animal, his very becoming-subject, his historicity, his emergence out of nature, his sociality, his access to knowledge and technics, all that, everything (in a nonfinite number of predicates) that is proper to man would derive from this originary fault, indeed, from this default in propriety — and from the imperative necessity that finds in it its development and resilience (45).

Positing an entry into becoming which effects itself upon the timelessness of the wild, whether that “wild” is called “prelapsarian innocence” or “true Nature,” thus reproduces this dominant schema. A schema which dissolves the vast diversity of nonhuman animals in a becoming-Nature which necessarily lacks both responsibility and respond-ability. An absolute senselessness, in other words, from which a line of flight is ontologically impossible. Despite the positing of a potential for nonhuman animals to be gripped by a becoming “just as powerful as that of the human being with the animal,” the subjugating superiority of Man’s emergence from a feminized Nature and hence humanist exceptionalism is necessarily left unchallenged. Put simply, the apparent valorization of the (wild) animal remains essentially within the neighborhood of “the human” with all that that implies for a consideration of ethics.

Naturalizing the colonialism of “true Nature.” We can now understand how the drawing of a simple division between the wild and the tame reiterates contemporary structures of oppression, reinscribing the exceptional humanist privilege and thus remaining enchanted within a narcissistic privileging of the reflected human self. We can see too that the division of nonhuman animals into either the “wild” or the “tame” is, above all, a question of *familiarity*, that is, of the dogmatism that ensures a restricted ethics despite the apparent affirmation of “other” others. Barbara Noske expresses this clearly when she describes the prioritizing of wild animals over their domestic kin as “the other racism” (xii).

As a consequence of human “contamination,” as we have seen, the proper ways of being-dog, for example, have been rendered merely virtual according to Deleuze and Guattari and disqualified as “unnatural” by deep ecologists. Dogs, therefore, are not, or are no longer, “the real thing.” In this, I will argue in conclusion, Deleuze and Guattari inevitably reiterate a logic of colonialism which serves to constitute subjugated beings as *deserving* of oppression — an oppressive logic that tends to contaminate any number of animals, both human and nonhuman. This de-realizing contamination is, in short, a displacement of nonhuman animals by and within human language which renders their nonsubstitutable beings as mere simulacra.

This reproduction of certain animals as “not real,” that is, as “pale imitations” of their idealized wild counterparts and/or forebears, is at once Christianized discourse and imperialist logic. Put simply, the Platonic economy of *mimēsis* with its devalorization of the simulacrum produces a symbolic economy and specious logic of oppression that ensures that colonized beings must, as a *result* of their oppression, become somehow dull and stupid and thus — albeit *ex post facto* — materially and economically deserving of being exploited and oppressed.¹³

Hence, as David Nibert observes,

The capitalist exploiter of the coloured workers ... consigns them to employments and treatments that [are] humanly degrading. In order to justify this treatment the exploiters must argue that the workers are innately degraded and degenerate, consequently they naturally merit their condition.... This, then, is the beginning of modern race relations. It was not an abstract, immemorial feeling of mutual antipathy between groups, but rather a practical exploitative relationship with its socio-attitudinal facilitation (17).

We can thus more clearly understand Noske’s contention that the devalorization of domestic and domesticated animals constitutes the “other racism.” Just as there is nothing “natural” about the capitalist exploitation of colored workers, in the same way the antipathy towards instrumentalized, and thus commodified, nonhuman animals is nothing natural. Rather, it comes to be “natural-ized” as a result of practical exploitative relationships along with the co-constitutive reproduction of socio-attitudinal facilitation.

Here, too, we further disclose the “macho ethic” underlying the discourses of Deleuze and Guattari and of deep ecology. The idealizing of the “naturally” wild, unconstrained by time and uncontaminated by domestication, accords, as Karen Davis writes, “with the ‘masculine’ spirit of adventure and conquest,” which in the West looks down on those beings constituted as “unnatural, tame, and confined.” In this, Davis continues, the “analogy between women and nonhuman animals overlooks perhaps a more specifically crucial comparison between women and farm animals” (193). One thinks

most obviously here of reproductive rights, or the curtailing thereof by means of forced conception, be it by physical force — rape in whatever form or species—or by way of the prohibition of contraception and/or abortion.

Indeed, it is impossible to understand the economy of speciesism that organizes the wild-tame dichotomy without also attending to its coextensivity with other vectors of power. Once again, Karen Davis is helpful here. “Not only men,” she writes, “but women and animal protectionists exhibit a culturally conditioned indifference toward, and prejudice against, creatures whose lives appear too slavishly, too boringly, too stupidly female, too ‘cowlike’” (196-7). It is this entanglement of difference and indifference that gives us one way of understanding that which Derrida has famously termed “carnophallogocentrism.”¹⁴ Within its network of inculcation, the gendering of singular nonhuman animals is thus of the greatest importance.

To summarize, despite the apparent valorization of (wild) animals, Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of becoming nevertheless remains essentially enclosed within the narcissistic mirror of “the human.” Such is the high-walled enclave safeguarded by immigration police and so-called pest-controllers tasked with defending the indivisibility of the border, and of the impossibility and impassability of the ethical space beyond. In this sense, “immigration police” and “pest-controllers,” in seeking to conserve an imaginary space of order by displacing others, can thus be considered metaphors of each other, mutually rearticulating an inviolable property and propriety constructed upon the refusal of hospitality.

Here then, the “proper” of Deleuze and Guattari’s human is shown to depend upon a withholding of the offer of hospitality to all those who share our space and take our time but who are not “us.” Instead of the placing of restrictions organized around the wild-tame dichotomy, however, a *general* ethics (in itself a tautology) must by definition concern the giving of hospitality to *all* those other living beings who already find themselves excluded from it. Without this, the contemporary structures that oppress human as well as nonhuman animals will ultimately remain both intact and in force.

Notes

1. For a great many of us, of course, such a charge would be wholly positive. It should be noted too that, according to Badiou’s theory of the subject, nonhuman animals are necessarily condemned to an *eternal* oppression for which redress is neither possible nor

sought. This follows from Badiou's claim that oppression is never to be fought against, but rather is always and only a *consequence* of the appearing of a human subject of truth. See *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, 60ff.

2. See *A Thousand Plateaus*: "The error we must guard against is to believe that there is a kind of logical order to this string, these crossings or transformations. It is already going too far to postulate an order descending from the animal to the vegetable, then to molecules, to particles" (275).

3. In an often overlooked but nonetheless extremely important essay entitled "The Animals: Territory and Metamorphoses," Jean Baudrillard suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's use of "the animal" as a *model* of the absolute deterritorialization of desire is paradoxical, arguing instead that nonhuman animals are in fact territorial beings par excellence ("The Animals" 137). In this paper, which is practically a primer for the constitution of Animal Studies, Baudrillard offers an alternative notion of alliance to that proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, one which depends first of all upon the destruction of the "diabolic" symbolic division of species that necessarily constitutes humanism with "[a] logic parallel to racism" (133), and recognizing instead that every territory is a space of "insurmountable reciprocity" (141 n3). For a more scathing — although somewhat unfocused — critique of Deleuze and Guattari's use of "the animal," see also Xavier Vitamvor's "Unbecoming Animal Studies" in *The Minnesota Review*. No. 73/74 (2010), 183-187 (thanks to the anonymous reviewers at *Humanimalia* for drawing my attention to this article).

4. For a related critique, see Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. 26-29.

5. On this, see the interview with Arne Naess, reproduced in Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, 74-76.

6. As regards the "macho ethic" saturating this plateau, with obvious spleen Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* wonders whether it would be possible to "find in philosophy a clearer display of misogyny ... It took some nerve for D&G to write about becoming-woman just a few pages later!" (30).

7. Given the entangled vectors of power, it is not by chance that such a defense, in at least one of its major variants (what Marti Kheel calls the “holy hunter” defense), depends upon the claim that the nonhuman animal chooses to end her life for the benefit of the (generally male) human hunter. A claim which “has no more validity than the idea that a woman who is raped ‘asked for it’ or ‘willingly’ gave herself to the rapist” (Kheel “License to Kill” 104). On the philosophical mysticism of “holy hunters,” see the works of deep ecologists Holmes Rolston, Paul Shepard and, in particular, Gary Snyder. For Leopold’s “land ethic,” see *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, 237-64.

8. Jean Baudrillard, in his remarkable essay “The Animals” first published in 1981 (see note 3, above), already makes the point that, “if formerly the privilege of Man was founded on the monopoly of consciousness, today it is founded on the monopoly of the unconscious” (138). Nonetheless, he continues, one can at least hope that this refusal of the unconscious, repression, and the symbolic to all other animals will, sooner or later, cause us to “put in question once again the validity of these concepts, just as they govern and distinguish us today” (138).

9. In addition to the English language version entitled “The Transcendental ‘Stupidity’ (‘Bêtise’) of Man and the Becoming-Animal According to Deleuze” (2002) cited here, see the slightly different original version that makes up part of the fifth and sixth seminars collected in the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*. As Derrida himself demonstrates throughout, the translation of bêtise by stupidity is far from satisfactory (as indeed is the point made, in different ways, by both Derrida and Deleuze), and hence in the following it will for the large part be left untranslated.

10. On this, see Jacques Derrida’s now canonical essay “Différance” in *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. 1-28.

11. On the taking place having always already taken place as that which defines both iterability and “living being,” see my “Animals in Looking-Glass World: Überhumanism and Posthumanism in Heidegger and Nietzsche.” *Humanimalia* I:2 (Spring 2010), 46-85.

12. On Jacques Lacan and the notion of a nonhuman “lack of lack,” see Derrida “And Say the Animal Responded?” in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 119-140.

13. It has been convincingly argued that the domestication of nonhuman animals results in a decrease of brain size which both inhibits new characteristics and favors pathological conditions. This is not, however, a justification for exploitation, not a cause, but only its *effect*. A shameful effect, moreover, which in fact argues *against* the intensive imposition of non-mutual domestication.

14. See “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject.”

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