Do Anarchists Dream of Emancipated Sheep?

Contemporary Anarchism, Animal Liberation and the Implications of New Philosophy

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> Everything fits together, from the bird whose brood is crushed to the humans whose nest is destroyed by war.
>
> —Louise Michel

In this essay I explore the relations between contemporary anarchism and animal rights/liberation through the lens of Deleuze/Guattari-inflected complex systems theory. Specifically, I look at the liberalism and normative practices endemic to the mainstream animal rights movement, engaging with some of the more salient critiques that have emerged from Leftist and radical (anti-)political milieus and exploring the ways in which the theory and practice of anarchism—including its post- and nihilist strains—suggests an alternative, possibly more effective way of conceiving of animal liberation.

In mid-2010 a friend and I conducted an informal online survey of anarchists (Knoll S. and A. Eloff 2010). The survey took the form of an extended questionnaire containing around 60 questions. We were hoping that the results would provide us with a cursory sense of the composition and internal dynamics of the contemporary anarchist milieu. While the results of the survey, which was completed by around 2,500 people, were inevitably slanted due to its English language bias, mode of promotion and delivery (Anglophone anarchist internet channels) and structure (neither of us were experienced in this form of research), they are also highly suggestive; in many instances our key findings were strengthened by our subsequent meetings with anarchists from around the globe, including many from South America and various nonAnglophone European countries.

One of the most striking findings, although to some extent anticipated, was the number of vegans in the anarchist milieu. While general surveys of the U.S., UK and so on usually put the number of vegans at around 0.2–1.4 percent of the general population, over 11 percent of those taking our survey described their diet/lifestyle as vegan. While to some extent this can be explained as the result of subcultural practices—rites of inclusion and exclusion forming in and out groups—the correlations between veganism and various strains within anarchism, as well as the reasons given for practicing veganism, suggests something slightly more interesting.

Nineteen point six percent of self-identified anarcha-feminists, for instance, also identified as vegan, as did 19.4 percent of green anarchists. So-called 'anarcho'-capitalists on the other hand, were only vegan 1.8 percent of the time, a percentage roughly in line with the general population. Given the intersectional work done by feminists exploring the parallels between the oppression of other animals and the oppression of women under patriarchy, the first figure is unsurprising. The negative correlations between animal agriculture and ecological destruction, as well as the way in which the subjugation of other animals within industrial society is antithetical to the free, thriving, dis-alienated life sought by green anarchists, also suggests why veganism would feature as strongly as it does for this group. The gender distribution of vegans within the anarchist milieu paints a similar picture: 7 percent of male-identi-fied participants

described themselves as vegan, compared to 16.7 percent of female-identified participants and 25.7 percent of those identified as genderqueer/other (the survey had a free form gender box that we awkwardly summarized with this tentative descriptor).

Finally, 76 percent of vegans surveyed saw a connection between their diet and anarchism, whereas only 24 percent of non-vegans did. Reasons given by vegans for their practice of a vegan diet/lifestyle included: "animal liberation" "total liberation," "respect for all beings," "no one is free while others are oppressed" "compassion establishing why we should care about equality in the first place" "veganism is an expression of anti-authoritarianism and personal empowerment through dietary choices; it directly divests from (and actively promotes an alternative to) a particularly barbarous and destructive sector of our society" "eating meat and other animal products is bad for the environment and represents another form of oppression" "extend the same ethics to non-human animals: no hierarchy, solidarity etc.," "speciesism is another oppressive institution that we should consider and address as anarchists" and "opposition to all forms of domination requires a willingness to refuse oppression animals"

Reasons given by non-vegans for their diet are equally illuminating: "I eat what I want" "anarchy is a life without structure or authority, therefore my diet follows neither of these" "I believe all things are equal and therefore anything goes" "I get sick if I don't eat animal protein, how can I smash the state if I'm too tired to get out of bed?" "anarchism is about people; we eat what we want to eat; dictating that is fascist," "a restrictive diet makes it very difficult to organize with community outside of the anarchist scene," "all forms of consumption are related to the oppression of workers" "meat eating is natural and right for humans—naturalism and anarchism go hand in hand" and, notably, "I see that my diet stands in contradiction to my anarchist beliefs, and while I'm not willing to stop eating meat, I do wish to find ways to raise animals in a far more humane way than is the norm now."

It seems reasonably clear that in both cases, anarchists applied the basic principles of the anarchist ethos—a critique of relations of hierarchy and domination and the pursuit of a life of free equals—to their diet/lifestyle, reaching vastly different conclusions in the process. It is also clear, however, that the case for veganism as a part of anarchist practice appears substantially more coherent and well-reasoned. While we will not debate the merits of each application of anarchism to diet here, it is worth considering the historical scope of the relation between anarchism and a critique of animal exploitation.

Early Anarchists and Radicals and Animal Liberation

In her memoirs, French anarchist and radical schoolteacher Louise Michel, famous for her role in the Paris Commune of 1871, wrote that she could trace her anarchist

politics back to her early experiences of animal exploitation: "As far back as I can remember, the origin of my revolt against the powerful was my horror at the tortures inflicted on animals... I used to wish animals could get revenge, that the dog could bite the man who was mercilessly beating him, that the horse bleeding under the whip could throw off the man tormenting him" (Michel 1981, p. 24).

From an early age, Michel rescued animals, even finding time during the height of the Commune to rescue a cat: "I was accused of allowing my concern for animals to outweigh the problems of humans at the Perronnnet barricade ... during the Commune, when I ran to help a cat in peril.. The unfortunate beast was crouched in a corner that was being scoured by shells, and it was crying out" (Michel 1981, p. 28).

She also appears to have been one of the very first people to recognize the link between animal exploitation and human subjugation and was opposed to vivisection, arguing that "this useless suffering perpetrated in the name of science must end" (Michel 1981, p. 29).

Renowned geographer and anarchist Élisée Reclus, a contemporary of Michel's, came out even more strongly against the oppression of other animals, presaging many contemporary views around the objectification of these others in arguing that

> the animals sacrificed to man's appetite have been systematically and methodically made hideous, shapeless, and debased in intelligence and moral worth... The name even of the animal into which the boar has been transformed is used as the grossest of insults; the mass of flesh we see wallowing in noisome pools is so loathsome to look at that we agree to avoid all similarity of name between the beast and the dishes we make out of it [Reclus 1901].

Like Michel, Reclus also saw the connection between the subjugation of humans and that of other animals, asking whether there was indeed "so much difference between the dead body of a bullock and that of a man," and, in an early comparison of speciesism with racism, questioning the morality that imposed two laws for mankind, one that applied "to the yellow races and the other ... the privilege of the white," observing that "to assassinate or torture the first named is, it seems, henceforth permissible, while it is wrong to do so to the second" and seeing "our morality, as applied to animals, [as] equally elastic" (Reclus 1901).

Michel and Reclus were far from the only historical anarchists concerned with the subjugation of other animals; their views reflect a perennial strand of anti-speciesism weaving its way through the last 160-odd years of anarchist theory and practice. French anarchists in the 1920s, for example, ran a number of vegetarian restaurants and social centers and even in some cases argued against the inconsistencies of vegetarianism and for a more rigorous végétalienism (roughly equivalent to contemporary veganism). The anarchist G. Butaud, for instance, distinguished strongly between the two and opened a restaurant called the Foyer Végétalien in 1923.

Elsewhere, the notorious Bonnot Gang—a group of French illegalist anarchists that operated in France and Belgium in 1911–12—were also strict vegetarians and végétaliens, practicising what was then termed *la vie naturelle* and arguing for the cognitive and physical benefits of a plant-based diet for revolutionaries (Parry 1987).

Vegetarianism was also a notable trend amongst Spanish anarchosyndicalists (including those of the CNT-FAI) from the late 19th century onwards, especially among the poor peasants of the south. As Daniel Guérin argues in *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (Guérin 1970), vegetarian/végétalien living were sometimes viewed as an integral part of the prefigurative practices of those preparing for life in an anarchist society, even if this sometimes also drifted towards the proscriptive and moralistic (some anarchists also *a priori* eschewed all intoxicating substances and even, in some cases, sex before marriage). As late as 1936, the CNT devoted an entire discussion at its national congress to "vegetarians, nudists, naturists and 'opponents of industrial technology' within a libertarian communist [anarchist] society."

It would be fascinating, albeit beyond the scope of this piece, to trace the trajectory of these early moves towards radical veganism, animal liberation and anti-speciesism through the decades to the current time. In the interest of brevity, however, we will move straight ahead to the early 80s and the emergence of "veganarchism."

No Meat, No Milk, No Masters!

The sudden growth of veganism and animal liberation theory and practice within the anarchist milieu post-80s can probably be traced back to the influence of anarcho-punk and specifically the band Crass, who loudly endorsed anti-speciesism from the late 70s onwards and influenced an entire generation of European anarchists to mobilize against the exploitation of other animals not just through their lifestyle practices but also through the development of a direct action approach to animal liberation typified by the ALF, an organizational practice and philosophy created by anarchists.

These practices remained, for the most part and with some notable exceptions, under-theorized until the early '90s, at which time anarchists began to analyze them in more depth in order to provide a stronger philosophical foundation—in line with anarchism—for a vegan/animal liberation position that had by then veered towards a partly unconsidered subculturalism. These early analyses are perhaps best typified by Brian A. Dominick's *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution* (Dominick 1997), an essay wherein the term "veganarchism" appears to have been first coined. In this essay, which has been widely distributed throughout the milieu and is still found in zine form on the shelves of many infoshops around the world, Dominick explores the intersections between economic oppression, statism, sexism, homophobia, patriarchy, racism, speciesism and environmental destruction. He argues that these hierarchical and oppressive social relations and their myriad interconnections need to be engaged

in a comprehensive way without arbitrarily reducing them to one or two solely relevant factors (e.g., the class reductionism of some Marxisms).

Anarchist and animal liberation philosopher Dr. Steve Best encapsulates this position well in his promotion of what he terms "total liberation":

> The global capitalist world system is inherently destructive to people, animals, and nature. It is unsustainable and the bills for three centuries of industrialization are now due. It cannot be humanized, civilized, or made green-friendly, but rather must be transcended through revolution at all levels—economic, political, legal, cultural, technological, moral, and conceptual [Best, 2010].
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> [Total liberation] takes the struggle for rights, equality, and nonviolence to the next level, beyond the artificial moral and legal boundaries of humanism, in order to challenge all prejudices and hierarchies, including speciesism [ibid.].

It should be noted in this regard that Dominick does, despite himself, perform something of a reduction in arguing via what could be seen as an appeal to the Marxist notions of subsumption and primitive communism. Dominick argues in this regard that the domestication of other animals has been responsible for, and continues to underpin, the "emergence of patriarchy, state power, slavery, hierarchy and domination of all kinds." This is to some extent echoed in *Beasts of Burden* (Antagonism 1999), another zine released at around the same time that applies a more detailed Marxist analysis.

While the case he makes for animal exploitation as the root form of domination is problematic—and to some extent arbitrary—his essay does provide a strong critique of depoliticized vegan consumerism and liberal single-issue animal rights. Dominick keenly interrogates the myopia of consumer activism and asks how vegans can justify the consumption of corporate products when the human labor embedded in them is so closely analogous to non-human suffering (an analogy that vegans themselves often draw, albeit in the other direction). In place of what he argues—using the vivid example of a coercive, government-supported "War on Meat"—are pointless and easily recuperated liberal reforms, Dominick proposes the practice of veganarchism as an explicitly politicized radical philosophy of animal liberation that retains just as much focus on the subjugation of human beings via capitalism, the state, white supremacy, patriarchy and so on as it does on our relations to other animals. In this regard, the essay supports direct action, endorsing affinity groups ranging from the anti-consumerist vegan propaganda of Food Not Bombs through to the midnight capers of the Animal Liberation and Earth Liberation Fronts.

Dominick's views are echoed in several other pieces produced around this time, and in many of the explicitly radical/anarchist periodicals, news websites, press offices, and so on that have since emerged (the online Talon Conspiracy archive of animal liberation publications is a phenomenal repository of these).

These radical perspectives are also deeply cynical about the identity politics of what they sometimes, perhaps unfairly, term the 'animal whites movement', seeing the endless vegan puritanism and one-upmanship of otherwise completely apolitical middle class consumers as little more than a particularly egregious instance of subjectivities wrought by capitalist social relations attempting to change their lot through what Foucault called the entrepreneurship of the self (Foucault 2008, 226). As insurrectionary anarchist Wolfi Landstreicher notes, "by accepting the idea (promoted heavily by progressive education and publicity) that the structures of oppression are essentially mindsets inside of ourselves, we become focused on our own presumed weakness, on how crippled we supposedly are. Our time is eaten up by attempts at self-healing that never come to an end, because we become so focused on ourselves and our inability to walk that we fail to notice the chain on our leg" (Landstreicher 2005).

The growth of veganarchism and total liberation perspectives within contemporary anarchist circles has also led to the unfolding of a lively debate about the relation between radical (anti-)politics and other animals. Notable essays like *Devastate to Liberate or Devastating Liberal* (Anonymous 2009), the insurrectionary anarchist critique *A Harvest of Dead Elephants* (Anonymous 2007) and disparaging commentary by everyone from far-leftist group Troploin (Troploin) to French post-structuralist and anarcho-syndicalist Daniel Colson (Colson 2001) and arch-anti-vegan and authoritarian Lierre Keith, author of the astonishingly poorly-argued *The Vegetarian Myth* (Keith 2009) have sought to disentangle animal liberation from human liberation struggles, arguing that radicals have fallen prey to sentimentalism, liberalism and distraction. For the most part, however, these critiques operate with a completely false sense of what animal liberation argues for, conflating it with liberal animal rights, philosophical idealism, proscriptive morality and various other positions anarchists rightly find untenable. The level of intellectual dishonesty and the manipulative argumentation of some of these pieces is telling, and echoes the typical defensive postures of meat-eaters within mainstream society. Even here, however, the critique of consumer activism and reform remains unequivocal.

While a full constructive engagement with these critiques will have to wait for a future essay, it is worth considering how strikingly at odds their assumptions are not only with radical animal liberation discourses and practices (including that of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies) but even with most of the contemporary theoretical engagements of the relatively apolitical, liberal animal rights thinkers they disparage.

From Animal Rights to the Abstract Machine of Hierarchy and Domination

It is true that, for the most part, the traditional scope of what we can term 'liberal animal rights' has been single issue focused and operates within the ambit of normative moral discourse. Philosophers like Singer, Francione, Regan and so on tend to argue, however powerful their descriptive registers, from the analytic paradigm of abstract moral cases, endorsing, whether explicitly or not, a set of universally binding proscriptions that rely on a series of un-interrogated assumptions around subjectivity, agency, rationality and the status of moral claims. To unpack this a little, liberal animal rightists assume that there is a general discursive moral framework within which we can argue for the rights of other animals; that through this framework we can make successful moral appeals on behalf of other animals based on observations of familiarity or overlap in traits or capacities with what we understand as morally salient human characteristics; that we can enshrine the rights we win for other animals within a state legal apparatus and that these rights will, by virtue of this apparatus, be successfully defended.

At the same time, liberal animal rights does, it must be noted, invoke other oppressive social relations in order to draw analogies, but it tends to do so in a much more limited manner than advocates of total liberation do. For instance, while liberal animal rightists are quick to argue by analogy that contemporary animal exploitation is equivalent to the Holocaust, or that the institutions of animal exploitation are all too similar to those of slavery and patriarchy, this is seen as merely a means to an end: a strong analogy invokes sufficient moral sentiment to bolster a position that doesn't always seek so much seek to widen the moral circle as to shift it.

This is perhaps also due to what Manuel DeLanda, a contemporary complex systems theorist who in his *Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (DeLanda 2006) applies the philosophical concepts of Gilles Deleuze to social organization, sees as the micro-reductionism of liberal political philosophy, wherein the sole socially relevant force is the interaction of rational individual agents. DeLanda contrasts this with the macro-reductionism of vulgar (if slightly caricatured) base-superstructure Marxism, which reduces the explanation of social dynamics to a kind of social constructionism where exploitative economic arrangements wholly structure society and define the trajectories of the individuals embedded within it. In other words, because liberal animal rights so often operates with that same set of assumptions evident in everything from Cartesianism and Enlightenment humanism through to neoliberalism, it lacks the capacity to fully comprehend the partly systemic and highly imbricated nature of various oppressive social relations.

Deleuze and co-author Félix Guattari, along with Foucault, provide a much more useful set of tools with which to explore the contemporary sociopolitical terrain, something that has been increasingly picked up on by animal rights/liberation theorists

working within Critical Animal Studies and (post-) continental schools of thought. Deleuze and Guattari propose that in place of fully bounded discrete entities interacting in linear fashion on a single ontological level in order to produce all the complex dynamisms of contemporary society, we would do better to regard the world as comprised of vast networks of interconnected components, each of which can span several domains (material, linguistic, social, abstract and so on). They refer to these as *assemblages* or *arrangements* (from the French *agencement,* and similar to what Foucault refers to as a *dispositif,* i.e., an arrangement of the visible and the sayable) and see them as allowing for complex flows and processes of feedback and adaptation between different scales or levels of organizational complexity.

> On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away [Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp. 97–8].

DeLanda's neo-Deleuzoguattarian assemblage theory allows us, therefore, to interrogate social (and other) phenomena in a way that doesn't lead to arbitrary reductionisms in either direction. It is worth noting that a fair amount of work in intersectionality and queer theories operates with a similar, often also Deleuze-inspired, understanding of the social terrain as complex series of intersecting, heterogeneous components (Deleuze and Guattari discuss, for example, the man-horse-bow assemblage of the nomads in *A Thousand Plateaus* [1987]).

Deleuze and Guattari, however, don't simply argue that we should conceive of the world in terms of arrangements; following Deleuze's tripartite ontology of virtual, intensive and actual they also see these arrangements as the actualizations of intensive dynamisms driven by virtual multiplicities, something DeLanda and fellow Deleuzian John Protevi see as near-identical with the phase spaces littered with singularities (bifurcation points) and surrounding basins of attraction that are discussed in complexity theory (DeLanda 2005, Protevi 2013, Bonta and Protevi 2004). In short, Deleuze proposes that the actual world of fully described final forms that comprises our everyday reality is the result of underlying dynamisms that operate within a selfdifferentiating field of potential he terms the virtual and which contains all the *real possibilities* that are actualized (without exhausting these possibilities) in any actual concrete assemblage. For Deleuze, all there is production; this production, which Deleuze also describes as the solving of virtual problems (DeLanda gives the useful example of the minimization of surface tension as a virtual problem solved in different ways by soap bubbles and salt crystals), takes place through the *self-differentiation* of an *undifferentiated* field of singularities that, via intensive dynamisms, *differentiates* into actual/

extensive forms that, crucially for Deleuze, do not resemble the multiplicities that give rise to them.

> [T]he nature of the virtual is such that, for it, to be actualized is to be differenciated. Each differenciation is a local integration or a local solution [...] An organism is nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differenciated organs, such as the eye which solves a light "problem" [Deleuze 2013, p. 211].

The virtual, also termed *the plane of consistency,* and the intensive, thus allow us a way to think about the structures and processes underlying concrete assemblages via a description of their patterns and thresholds of behavior. There is a lot more subtlety and sophistication to what Deleuze calls his *method of dramatization* (Deleuze 2004, pp. 94–116), something DeLanda unpacks brilliantly in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (DeLanda 2005), but for the present purposes what is most important for us to understand is the modal status of the virtual and the multiplicities that comprise it. Deleuze does not argue that the virtual is merely the possible; in fact he explicitly contrasts it with this, arguing that it is real without being actual. Nor is he proposing a neo-Platonic world of ideal forms; Deleuze is an immanentist opposed to the transcendent, perennial categories of Platonism and a fair amount of his early work is dedicated to precisely this. The composition of the virtual is as contingent as that of the actual and there is no world of eternal forms that remains transcendent to the actual.

Although Deleuze's terminology morphs in various ways through his oeuvre, he also uses the terms *abstract machine* and *virtual Idea* in ways largely commensurate with the concept of *multiplicity* (in his later work with Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, 1987), which arguably completely naturalizes his philosophy, Deleuze refers almost solely to abstract machines) to describe a virtual distribution of tendencies and capacities (unformed matters and non-formal functions) as an interwoven collection of singular and ordinary points that underlies and defines each assemblage. Inspired by what has been termed Guattari's *diagrammatic thought,* Deleuze and Guattari propose a way of modeling the functioning of abstract machines not via rigorous blueprints (what they call "tracings") but rather by way of *diagrams* of relations between "pure functions" (i.e., without any content) and unformed but capability-bearing (i.e., intensive) "pure matter"—or as Deleuze puts it in his book on Foucault, intersecting lines of force relations—that describe multiple potential actual instantiations. Referring to Foucault's work on disciplinary societies, for example, they suggest that the idea of the Panopticon refers precisely to a diagram of this sort:

> The panopticon must not be understood as a dream building, it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology ... detached from any specific use [Deleuze 1988, p. 205].

In other words, as opposed to the Panopticon being any specific real-world disciplinary practice it instead provides the abstract set of relations—the capacities to affect and be affected—that underlie discipline as a type of social relation.

Why, however, is this excursis into Deleuze and Guattari of relevance to us here? Just as they propose a diagram of discipline, could we not argue that there is, similarly, an abstract machine of hierarchy and domination that is actualized in various heterogeneous and overlapping domains and which does not necessarily resemble any of these actualizations? For instance, for all their specificities of instantiation, could we not understand sexism, racism, class exploitation (via capital and the State) and speciesism as they exist in the real world as complex assemblages that are in part concrete actualizations of the same abstract machine—that reproduce the same diagram of force relations without exhausting the divergent potential actualizations it describes?

If our speculation here holds, then, to return to our earlier discussion of liberalism, the problem with liberal animal rights is not so much that it doesn't recognize relations of hierarchy and domination as they exist in the world but that it remains mired in the actual, failing to recognize the underlying abstract machine and thus the resonance between heterogeneous cases of exploitative social relations, each of which also in part serves as a reification of the diagram. As Protevi and Bonta argue, if we are to understand the functioning of the everyday world around us then we need to remind ourselves that "actual, stratified, systems hide the intensive nature of the morphogenetic processes that gave rise to them—and therefore, a fortiori, the virtual multiplicities structuring those processes—beneath extensive properties and definite qualities. It is as if the actual were the congealing of the intensive and the burying of the virtual" (Bonta and Protevi 2004, p. 49).

Anarchists, on the other hand, are perhaps the exemplary "diagrammatic thinkers" this being evident in the types of cases they make for the abolition of the state form in general as opposed to specific states for example, or exploitative economic relations in general as opposed to merely one or two problematic instantiations of the market. Following a process Deleuze terms variously *counter-effectuation* and *vice-diction,* anarchist critiques and practices often seek to map the flows and processes underlying actual arrangements of knowledge, power, material and so on back to the virtual multiplicities/abstract machines that produce these (and are, importantly, in turn produced by them via a process of *counter-actualization*—a rearrangement of the singularities and basins of attraction defining a virtual multiplicity), which perhaps also explains the anarchist focus on prefigurative practice as a type of warding off of a diagram of hierarchy and domination as well as the anarchist endorsement not of a proscriptive morality but a general ethos that proposes and seeks to construct (in the spirit of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a *minor science* that seeks to establish "the Idea/multiplicity of something—'constructing a concept'—by moving from extensity through intensity to virtuality" (Protevi 2007) an alternate diagram of equal-liberty (Newman 2011).

So how might we apply all this to our relations to other animals? Before we look at some tentative answers, it is worth briefly exploring some other alternatives to liberal animal rights that have emerged in recent years.

Aporias and Subtle Normativities

A significant portion of those working in Critical Animal Studies today appear to have heeded Rosi Braidotti's warning that anthropomorphizing animals by seeking to afford them equal rights results in a "becoming-human" of animals that reproduces all the ills of normativity that led to, and continue to lead to, hierarchies and dominations of all kinds. As Braidotti observes, if we wish to become other than we are then we should constantly remind ourselves that "no qualitative becoming can be generated by or at the centre, or in a dominant position. Man is a dead static core of indexed negativity. To introduce animal and earth others into this category is not exactly doing them a favour" (Braidotti 2006, p. 103).

In lieu of rights and normativity, much contemporary work focuses instead on notions of *zoe* or bare life (Agamben 1998), or on a Butlerian sense of shared precarity (Butler 2006), or a Derridean aporetic engagement with our shared animality. As Matthew Calarco (2012) puts it in a recent interview, "continental philosophy ... would have our thinking about animals begin from a site of aporia, of confusion and tumult, about who humans are and who animals are. This starting point asks us to construct alternative concepts and alternative ways of thinking that no longer trust uncritically the categories and distinctions that have structured the dominant culture's ways of thinking and living up to this point."

Calarco also argues that "viewing humans and animals as indistinct entails seeing all of us as caught up in a shared space of ontological and ethical experimentation," echoing Deleuze and Guattari's valorization of minor science. Such sentiments notwithstanding, for much of this work the focus is on a neo-Levinasian infinite demand of the necessarily othered (transcendent) Other to the (transcendental) self; the register is one of ontological vulnerability, trauma, infinite justice, impossible horizons and melancholia that many anarchists, especially those from Nietzsche-inflected post-left style traditions, would argue separates us from our capacity to act by rendering us *a priori* beholden to a set of abstractions that function as a form of alienation and operate in the reverse direction to the affirmation and experimentation concomitant with the "life without measure" (Landstreicher 2005) that is called for both by anarchists and by Deleuze and Guattari.

Additionally, there is still a subtle normativity at work in the ethics of precarity, aporia, etc., in that it remains predicated upon a dialectics of absolute responsibility. This is far from what I have previously termed, following Braidotti, a Deleuzian "aesthetics of imbrication in movement, a reciprocal feedback loop of affect and expres-

sion, exchange and becoming" (Eloff 2013), something that, in my view, sits far more comfortably with anarchism.

The World Is Not Just Made of Words

There is another problem endemic to much contemporary thought and action around the dismantling of oppressive relations: we have yet to fully disentangle ourselves from the discursive reductionism of the linguistic turn. Indeed, a fair amount of work in Critical Animal Studies remains trapped in an endless hermeneutics of discourses and ideologies. While an interrogation of the role of dominant significations in constructing social reality is certainly a necessary component of any liberatory practice, it is by no means sufficient. As many of those aligned with the recent shift in philosophy towards neomaterialisms, object-oriented ontologies and speculative realisms (several of whom, interestingly, have recognized the need to deal explicitly with animal liberation, veganism and so on) have argued, we are enmeshed not just in fields of words but also within what Levi Bryant calls *thermopolitics* (Bryant 2014) and what Maurizio Lazzarato, following Guattari, terms *machinic enslavement* (Guattari 2010). These thinkers argue that part of the reason struggles for freedom and equality fail is that they remain solely discursive, seeking to deconstruct the false ideologies that keep us from recognizing our subjugation without recognizing that in many cases we might be intimately aware of this subjugation but materially constrained by the way in which the social terrain has been constructed by contemporary relations of production, distribution and so on.

As Lazzarato (2014, p. 12) argues, in capitalism subjectivity is produced both by apparatuses of social subjection and by machinic enslavement. While the former assigns us "an identity, a sex, a body, a profession, a nationality, and so on," manufacturing individuated subjects and their behavior in "response to the needs of the social division of labor," machinic enslavement simultaneously de-individuates us into component parts of technical and social machines:

> Now, capitalism reveals a twofold cynicism: the "humanist" cynicism of assigning us individuality and pre-established roles (worker, consumer, unemployed, man/woman, artist, etc.) in which individuals are necessarily alienated; and the "dehumanizing" cynicism of including us in an assemblage that no longer distinguishes between human and non-human, subject and object, or words and things [ibid].

If we are to become more effective then, as anarchists or as animal liberationists, we need to engage not just with the words that intersect with the world in myriad complex ways, but with the world itself in its full materiality; with both words and things, as Foucault once said. We also need to eradicate the residual moral normativities that

prevent a full unfolding of the type of immanent, situational ethics that best reflects both anarchy and the implications of recent materialist philosophy.

Anarchist/Nihilist Ethics...

> When we use the term "ethical" we're never referring to a set of precepts capable of formulation, of rules to observe, of codes to establish... No formal ethics is possible. There is only the interplay of forms-of-life among themselves, and the protocols of experimentation that guide them locally.
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> —Tiqqun [2012, p. 144].

In *Its core is the negation* (De Acosta 2014), a response to Duane Rousselle's *After Post-anarchism* (Rousselle 2012), Alejandro De Acosta contrasts morality and ethics, arguing that the former, an example of the type of normativity many of us are rightly critical of, functions as a form of social control. More importantly, he also argues that any ethical universalism that emphasizes homogeneous ways of life in the name of a shared good is similarly problematic in its reification of this good—a rejection of transcendent morality that is reintroduced immanently. De Acosta also echoes Rousselle's skepticism of ethical pluralism as retaining a type of universalism:

> The relativist, when put to the test, must defend a universal dimension *for relativism itself* or else risk relativism's own subsumption under the universalist framework. If, for example, I state that each individual builds his own ethical framework then I must account for the fact that each individual is united with others in his relative autonomy to construct an independent ethical framework. At the normative level, for example, if I claim that each individual ought to be capable of realizing his own ethical maxim then I must as a natural consequence also maintain that each individual ought to be protected against the imposition of another ethical maxim; this latter claim can only be accomplished with recourse to the universal dimension. When taken to its conclusion, then, relativism is always a cunning form of universalism [Rousselle 2013].

In other words, the type of meta-ethical relativism invoked in discussions of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism is a subtle and insidious form of meta-ethical universalism. As anarchists, this will not suffice and so Rousselle and De Acosta advocate instead a form of ethical nihilism, what Rousselle articulates as a "belief that ethical truths, if they can be said to exist at all, derive from the paradoxical non-place within the heart of any place" (Rousselle 2012, p. 43). This aligns well with anarchism in that "nihilists seek to discredit and/or interrupt all universalist and relativist responses to the question of place ... nihilists are critics of all that currently exists and they raise this critique against all such one-sided foundations and systems."

This is also strikingly similar to the nomadic ethics proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, which I have explored at length elsewhere (Eloff 2010, 2013). In brief, for Deleuze nomadic ethics requires epistemological humility; it is anti-essentialist and non-normative, situated and contingent and emerges from situations themselves instead of being imposed upon them. It is an immanent ethics of experimentation that appeals to nothing outside of itself, a bio-centered, non-anthropocentric egalitarianism that recognizes our enfolding of and enfoldment within the world around us and a care for the self that is immediately a care for the not-self, for the infinitely complex web of relations within, and which are, our shared habitats. It is a practice of becoming together in constant differentiation, in affirmation of a deeper principle of difference, of differentiation, with an enhanced sense of situated accountability that "enlarges the sense of collectively bound subjectivity to non-human agents, from our genetic neighbours the animals, to the earth as a biosphere as a whole" (Braidotti 2006, p. 136).

This ethics, whether anarchist, nihilist or nomadic in flavor, is, its fluid transversality, automatically inclusive of our ethical relations to others of whatever type or species without having to posit a discrete category of animality. Nor do we necessarily need to invoke a separate domain of animal liberation: nomadic ethics is inherently liberatory, both in principle and in practice. It is already (anti-)politics.

...And an Imbricated Monadological Practice of Collective Liberation

There is so much more to discuss, but we must draw to a close. How do we move forward? What are the implications of all this for our everyday practices as anarchists and/or animal liberationists?

In a sense, what Deleuze and Guattari propose, through their ontology and their ethics, is what they poetically describe as the coming of a new people for a new Earth: the unfolding or becoming of a new set of relations between all of us, mineral, plant, animal and otherwise, that, as Deleuze says, allows us to become worthy of what happens to us. In sum, a new vision of nature, or life, or being more generally, a non-totalizable concatenation, in the words of Timothy Morton, of new arrangements and a counter-actualization of new diagrams. And, in the process, a renewed, non-reductive and immanent collection of analyses, tactics and strategies—including a rigorous practice of vice-diction and what Protevi terms, awkwardly but beautifully, a geo-hydrosolar-bio-techno-politics (Protevi 2013) — that will allow us to dismantle and replace the hierarchy and domination, the oppression and subjugation, both of ourselves and each other, that still sadly typifies the contemporary world and that operates in myriad heterogeneous and irreducible actualizations of the same virtual diagrams. There is no easy, final answer here, just a renewed questioning and inexhaustible process of experimentation with no appeal to anything beyond itself; no transcendent, proscrip-

tive morality, no relativism that conceals a subtle universalism, no perennial good, no ground.

As the nomadic, anarchist subjects who will people this new Earth, we will remain neither self-identical nor homogeneous to ourselves; instead, we will be in constant becoming in relation both to the irreducibly multiple nature of our composition and the myriad ways in which we overlap with, are imbricated with, relate to and compose, arrangements on multiple scales, multiple ecologies. We are *metastable* and can remain faithful both to ourselves and to the construction of an emancipatory movement that can defeat all forms of oppression precisely through our becoming other, together, through what Landstreicher calls a *projectual* life underpinned by what Colson terms an anarchist neo-monadology. As Colson argues, this process of experimentation involves a recognition, inspired by anarchism, of the "capacity of beings to rely on themselves," and of "the singularity of the relationship each has to the world," with each being seen as "unique and irreplaceable ... the bearer of all of the others" (Colson 1996).

There is no map to this new Earth save for the one we are always, and always provisionally, drawing together, whatever our phylum, class or order. In drawing, let us hope we remember, as Alain Beaulieu says, that domination is indeed the lowest degree of affectability (Beaulieu 2011, p. 69–88).

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