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Putting an End to “Man”: Nature and the Human in Hegel, Becoming-Animal and Abolitionism

The article attempts to reconstruct the difference between the ontologies of Hegel and Deleuze. The question of nature and Man (as different from the human animal) in both philosophies can provide crucial insight into the fundamental ontological disparity between the two philosophies. Nature, according to Hegel, is truly external to the idea and (as such) is at the same time a moment in the movement of the concept becoming what it is. Deleuze, in contrast, goes back to pre-Kantian ontology without abandoning the transcendental level of analysis. This enables him to bestow upon nature real externality and to transform the dialectic into a mechanism of opening to the inexhaustible outside, not of confirming the primacy of the concept. The case of becoming-animal demonstrates the political implications of this ontological choice: it can be understood as a way of putting an end to “Man,” an enterprise compatible with abolitionist postulates.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, Hegel, Deleuze and Guattari, Man, nature

Deleuze—Hegelian after all?

The Deleuze-Hegel relationship is a complicated one. Although Deleuze never wrote a book about Hegel, as he did about Kant, and in his writings we can find some anti-Hegelian rhetoric (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Deleuze 1994, 91–93), it may prove to be only rhetoric; he also stated that “Hegel is the first to think movement in the concept” (Martin 2013, 227)—a crucial discovery that was the basis of Deleuze’s own philosophical project. He also praised Hegel in *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* for introducing the infinite representation (Deleuze 1990a, 341; Deleuze 1994, 81–82)—a crucial innovation that allowed him to develop his own ontology of difference. Some interpreters also formulate a point that Deleuze may be viewed as belonging to the German speculative tradition as much as to the empiricist tradition—his decisive philosophical innovations can be traced back to an attempt to solve Kant’s problem concerning the dichotomy of the empirical ego and transcendental ego—a problem that was also crucial to Hegel (Sauvagnargues 2013; Somers-Hall 2013). Kantian-like syntheses of experience, sensory data and desire are the backbone of Deleuze’s thought. What is more, just like Hegel, he makes internal difference the principle of the movement of the concept—because, contrary to the stereotype, the divergence between the ontology of difference and dialectic is not synonymous with the divergence between the internal difference or process of differentiation present in each being and the “external” differentiation by binary oppositions set in motion by negation. Hegel is not de Saussure—his concepts move precisely because they differ internally, from themselves—“always already,” on the most basic level, just like (at a glance) Deleuzian concepts:

Hegel uses terms like “identity” and “in itself” only to emphasize how strange it is that the in- itself of every thing is *in* another thing. (...) For Hegel, contradiction is not the solution for getting rid of differences once they emerge out of a ground; ground is the solution to how differences coexist after contradiction has torn them apart. (Lampert 2013, 186, 193)

Therefore we can conclude that Deleuze proposes, just like Marx or Catherine Malabou, an unorthodox reading of Hegel.

This does not mean, of course, that there are no serious divergences or conflicts between these two ontologies. Ultimately, despite many intersection points, they are incommensurable. The disparities are numerous. I will try to reconstruct only one of them, concerning the status

of nature in both philosophies, and the conclusions about the human or spirit/human as spirit, as well as pro-animal politics, that result from the ontological decisions concerning the status of nature.

This difference pertaining to the status of nature in the systems of both philosophers is very important, because it may help us prove the following points: first, that Deleuze's difference, although it bears many similarities to the dialectical movement of the concept, is in fact irreducible to it—Deleuze manages to posit the movement of the concept by other means than Hegel.

Second, that although Hegel's system gives its due to the empirical, the given—the domain external to the concept—he is not willing to grant this domain real externality, because he gives the conceptual domain primacy in advance. According to Hegel, nature is the external form in which the idea appears—it is the moment of the idea's greatest alienation. However, the fact that this alienation takes place precisely because the idea has to determine itself makes this externality merely conditional; it is a moment whose destiny is to be overcome with the transition to spirit, incarnated first in the human and then in various human institutions. In order for the substance to become subject, it has to, at some point, undergo a radical becoming-other—and this is the function nature performs in the process of the idea's becoming-itself (this makes Hegel, eventually, an idealist, although his idealism is definitely a peculiar one). For Deleuze, in contrast, nature is the domain that cannot be overcome—it is the subject that is the contingent, particular moment of the whole, and the aim of thinking (which also encompasses politics and art) is to become a substance—that is, something that is *not* a subject.

And finally third: that these disparities in the approach to the question of nature are responsible not only for the profound irreducibility of Hegel's and Deleuze's ontologies, but also for the difference in the way both philosophers approach the issue of anthropocentrism. Hegel—although he is by no means a humanist, and his philosophy is free from that which Jacques Derrida calls “anthropologism” (Derrida 1969, 36)—is an anthropocentrist, and his anthropocentrism is not something we can eliminate without eliminating the fundamental tenets of his ontology. In turn, Deleuze's (or more precisely Deleuze and Guattari's) ontology, in particular the concept of becoming, gives us an opportunity to overcome anthropocentrism—although in order to extract this possibility, we have to place this ontology in the context of abolitionist thought.

In presenting my case, I will reverse the order of arguments delineated above—I will start from the status of nature in Hegel, because it

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may help us to better understand what is at stake in the difference between the ways both philosophers conceive of nature.

Nature in Hegel

For a long time, Hegel's philosophy of nature was ridiculed (Posch 2011; Wandschneider 2013; Houlgate 1998; Verene 1998). Even those who were convinced of the importance of Hegel's contribution to ethics or social and political philosophy often chose to disregard the philosophy of nature as the "weak" spot in his system (Wandschneider 2013, 104; Schnädelbach 2006, 100). This was rooted in the assumption that "society and culture are areas of reality which, unlike nature, we can more readily regard as quasi-idealistic" (Maker 1998, 2).¹ Both scientists and philosophers in the 19th and the 20th century were outraged by what they perceived to be Hegel's philosophical arrogance towards the empirical. They condemned him as a philosopher who

intended to *derive* the structure of space, time, motion, matter, of the properties of light, electricity, magnetism, chemical elements, the essence of organisms (...), *completely and utterly from pure reason*, referring to empirical data where they somehow matched his ideas, but ignoring them where they did not. (Posch 2011, 180)

This was largely based on a misunderstanding (or simply a refusal to read Hegel's works). Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the case of the discovery of the planetoid Ceres. In his early work, *Dissertatio philosophica de orbitis planetarum* Hegel (1801) was supposed to deny the possibility that there may exist an undiscovered planet between Mars and Jupiter (hypothesized by astronomers since the 1770s); unfortunately for him, such a planet was discovered by Giuseppe Pazzi in the same year. However, as Thomas Posch stresses, Hegel never wanted to rule out the possibility of the existence of the planet; he merely "formulates a careful if—clause, saying that *if* a series based on the numbers proposed by Plato in his *Timaios* somehow reflects the true order of the pla-

1 This feature of the reception of Hegel was, thus, to some extent a symptom of the division of labor between the sciences—often interpreted in a positivist vein—and the humanities, which fought to free themselves from the accusation of unscientificity and establish a place for themselves as autonomous from the sciences. Unfortunately, this division prevented the researchers from perceiving the organic connections between the different parts of Hegel's system.

netary orbits, *then* there is no need to look for a planet between Mars and Jupiter” (Posch 2011, 178). Yet, “the myth of the dialectically annihilated asteroids” (Posch 2011, 179) persisted in the reception of Hegel. Nonetheless, careful reading of Hegel’s (1970) *Philosophy of Nature* testifies to the fact that, although he made what we recognize today as mistakes and obviously could not have predicted the scientific breakthroughs that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, he nevertheless possessed a thorough knowledge of the scientific developments of his time (Wandschneider 2013, 105).

Thus, Hegel definitely did not disregard the empirical or the given; the aim of his system was precisely to integrate the empirical into the conceptual, or rather to prove that the empirical, without losing its status as the “real,” is already contained in the conceptual, albeit in the form of externality—that there is no need to pose the external point that would allow us to ground the system. This is necessary, because the status of this external point is inevitably problematic, as debate on the Kantian thing-in-itself proved (Siemek 2012, 4–5, 20–23). If we try to base the validity of knowledge on something external, something we cannot construct *a priori*, but have to obtain from experience, we inevitably encounter a paradox, because to assume the existence of such something is to “apply categories beyond the domain of possible experience” (Siemek 2012, 6; my translation), as the early readers of Kant, like Salomon Maimon and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, recognized.

Hegel’s solution is to posit the original correlation of the subject and the object of cognition (Siemek 1998, 39; Meillassoux 2008, 11–12). This makes the thing-in-itself always already present in the system, which becomes self-grounding. At the same time, the subjective or conceptual component of this system undergoes a radical expropriation—it has to become-other, incarnate, like the Christian God, in a material form (Malabou 2005, 97; Schnädelbach 2006, 153–154): “substance withdraws from itself in order to enter into the particularity of its content. Through this movement of self-negation substance will posit itself as subject” (Malabou 2005, 11). This gesture leads William Maker to the claim that Hegel was not, despite the stereotype, an idealist (Maker 1998). This is a valid conclusion if we define idealism as the stance that “dismisses the facticity of the given” and assumes that “reality is thought or thought-like” (Maker 1998, 3). The conceptual, or “thought” in Hegel is real only insofar as it becomes radically dispossessed, insofar as it becomes something it is not—the given, the empirical; and the concept’s passage into what is most alien to it, namely nature, is the epitome of this becoming-other.

But how real is this movement of dispossession? In order to respond to this question, we would probably have to display a good amount of bad will towards Hegel; but, as Deleuze maintains, we never philosophize in good will (Deleuze 1994, 165, 166). The status of nature, which is the moment of the greatest alienation of the concept, will again serve as the good test of the traits of this feature of the Hegelian system—because it, as Donald Philip Verene states, “if light can be thrown on how the Idea becomes nature, the whole of the system can be illuminated” (Verene 1998, 213).

Nature is the external form in which the idea appears: “nature is also »the idea«, but it is the idea in the negative form of »otherness (*Anders-seyn*)«” (Wandschneider 2013, 107). As Hegel states at the very beginning of *Philosophy of Nature*:

Nature has yielded itself as the Idea in the form of *otherness*. Since the *Idea* is therefore the negative of itself, or *external to itself*, nature is not merely external relative to this Idea (and to the subjective existence of the same, spirit), but is embodied as nature in the determination of *externality*. (Hegel 1970 [1], 205)

Why does idea have to externalize itself in this way, make itself the negative of itself? Precisely in order to determine itself. As Maker explains, in the Hegelian system outlined in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the transition from logic to nature serves the goal of giving the idea an internal limit, which it needs in order to progress towards the state of concretization and differentiation—to “complete itself by a process of self-transformative transcendence” (Maker 1998, 9): “the logic’s initial articulation of radical self-determination itself requires an intrasystemic recognition and conceptualizing of *radical otherness*” (Maker 1998, 8). Thus, nature is not “an other which is not, in its determinate content, a derivative, reducible product of thought, a quasi-other, despite the fact that this content *is* articulated in and by thought” (Maker 1998). Or, in the words of Dieter Wandschneider:

What is logically ideal points beyond itself precisely because it is determined as un-conditioned; and it does this precisely as that which is not conditioned by the *non-ideal*, whatever that might be. Thus, the non-ideal is always co-implied by the logically ideal. (Wandschneider 2013, 107)

Without this externalization in the form of the non-ideal the idea would pass onto bad infinity, a linear progression without internal limit (Maker 1998, 9; Nuzzo 2013, 249–250)—this Hegelian nightmare which all thought should avoid at all cost, and which serves as an all-

-purpose bogeyman, appearing often when Hegelians criticize non-Hegelians (as we will see in the section devoted to Catherine Malabou's critique of Deleuze and Guattari).

Nature as the outside of the concept/idea is real: this we have to grant Hegel. But what does it mean to assert that it is at the same time articulated by thought? The controversy concerning Hegel's rejection of evolution might throw some light on this issue. In *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel states that:

Thinking consideration must reject such nebulous and basically sensuous conceptions as for example the so-called emergence of plants and animals out of water, and of the more highly developed animal organizations out of the lower etc. (...) To think of the genera as gradually evolving themselves out of one another in time is to make use of a completely empty concept. (Hegel 1979 [1], 212–213)

As Errol E. Harris stresses, Hegel could have not known the Darwinian version of the theory of evolution; what he rejected were the hypotheses of evolution that circulated in the second half of the 18th century, devoid yet of firm evidence (Harris 1998, 191); he thereby exercised “true scientific restraint” (Harris 1998, 192) towards the issue. What, then, would Hegel's reaction have been if he had been presented with Darwin's theory? According to Harris, he would probably have been inclined to reject it as well: “it is likely that (Hegel—J.B.) would have rejected its underlying assumption that species originate solely as a result of an accumulation of chance variations giving selective advantage” (Harris 1998, 189). But paradoxically, that would have made Hegel more modern than the 19th-century Darwinists, because the accounts of evolution developed in the second half of the 20th century acknowledge the existence of mechanisms other than the random accumulation of mutations:

There is today copious evidence that phenotypical change is not simply dependent on random mutation, and there is even some ground for believing that not all mutation is purely random; rather that some may be induced by organismic pressures to maintain the integrity of the living thing in its surroundings. (Harris 1998, 204)

This quasi-teleological dimension of evolution, connected to the existence of the complexity of organisms, which functions as a principle qualifying the phenomenon of random mutations, would have appealed to Hegel, because the “pressures to maintain the integrity of the living

thing” would have appeared to him as the activity of the concept in nature. In other words, he would have accepted the evolutionary mechanisms testifying to the existence of purposefulness in nature, and have dismissed the ones testifying to the non-purposeful, random, contingent character of natural processes (here “dismiss” means leave them to the empirical sciences).

Natural teleology is then the conceptual, rational dimension of nature, a manifestation of the fact that the concept is present in it. But it also has its non-conceptual aspect, related to the fact that it is the idea in the form of externality (exemplified here in random mutations). Or, in other words: the fact that nature is the real outside of the idea makes it at the same time something nonrational, nonconceptual, and something in which the concept has to be present after all. This is because there is nothing beyond the concept—therefore, nature does not add anything to the concept (Halper 1998, 34–35). This means that nature is conditioned, but not conditioning; determined, but not determining; it derives its unity from the idea, but in an inadequate, external form (Halper 1998, 36). Hence, nature is full of “transitional phenomena, borderline cases, and exceptions that do not occur in pure logic” (Posch 2011, 182). Because of this, “(t)hinking of nature (...) means negating the truth of the multiplicity of singular bodies that appear reciprocally indifferent and external to one another” (Ferrini 2013, 130).

Nature is the idea, although not in its active and transparent form, but in a form of weakness, passivity, “feebleness” (Hui 2019, 86) or “impotence.” We might also say that what nature “adds” to the logic is precisely this weakness/feebleness/impotence, this dimming of the concept. Thus, as Hegel says, nature is to some extent opaque to philosophy:

The impotence of nature is to be attributed to its only being able to maintain the determinations of the Notion in an abstract manner, and to its exposing the foundation of the particular to determination from without. (...) This impotence on the part of nature sets limits to philosophy; and it is the height of pointlessness to demand of the Notion that it should explain, and as it is said, construe or deduce these contingent products of nature, although the more isolated and trifling they are the easier the task appears to be. (Hegel 1970 [1], 215)

However, this opacity to philosophy makes nature transparent to the sciences:

Taken simply as such, nature is incomprehensible; and it must therefore be grasped as *pure separateness*. Yet the very point of Hegel’s philosophy of nature

lies in the insight that the comprehending account of nature cannot remain caught at the level of this abstract extrinsicality. (Wandschneider 2013, 110)

This opens space for the agency of the empirical sciences, which are able to describe precisely these various instances of idea in the mode of externality (Houlgate 1998, xiv).

The impotence of nature, which makes it a fitting object for the sciences, is also what makes nature insufficient from the philosophical perspective—and which lies behind the thesis that “the truth of nature lies in the next realm of the system, spirit” (Halper 1998, 37). This is the reason behind Hegel’s acceptance of the “great chain of being” (Lovejoy 1960; Posch 2011, 190; Ferrini 2011)—a hierarchical structure of natural forms ascending from the less perfect to the more perfect. This structure is treated in the *Encyclopaedia* as illustrating the stages of the progressive internalization of the concept, increasing the subjectivization of natural forms.

Inorganic matter has its life entirely outside itself and thus is the lowest form of life²:

The Idea has truth and actuality only in so far as it has subjectivity implicit within it. As the mere immediacy of the Idea, life is thus external to itself, and is not life, but merely the corpse of the living process. It is the organism as the totality of the inanimate existence of mechanical and physical nature. (Hegel 1970 [3], 9)

Vegetal life is the first stage of life proper (namely: differentiation, mediation and internalization), but it differentiates only in a modular, superficial way:

The plant is the primary subject which is for itself, and yet still has its origin in immediacy. It is however the feeble and infantine life which is not yet intrinsically differentiated. (...) In the plant, which is merely subjective animation in its primary immediacy, the objective organism and its subjectivity are still imme-

2 The fact that Hegel classifies the “geological organism” as a form of life may seem perplexing, but in reality it is another indication that he was in many respects ahead of his times: what is “geological organism,” if not Gaia, the self-organizing planetary ecosystem (Wandschneider 2013, 120)? However, we have to point out that this interpretation also testifies to the teleological character of Hegel’s thought on nature. From the perspective of sheer complexity, Gaia would seem to be “more perfect” than a single tree or a single mouse; and yet, for Hegel it is *lower* on the scale of beings, because despite its complexity it is less of a subject than a tree or a mouse.

dially identical. Consequently, the process whereby vegetable subjectivity articulates and sustains itself, is one in which it comes forth from itself, and falls apart into several individuals. The singleness of the whole individual is simply the basis of these, rather than a subjective unity of members; the part-bud, branch, and so on, is also the whole plant. (Hegel 1970 [3], 45–46)

With animals, we encounter for the first time a true subjectivity, which manifests itself in their activity of consuming and reproducing:

(...) nature of the animal, in which the actuality and externality of *immediate* singularity is countered by the intra-reflected *self of singularity* or the subjective universality which is within itself. (Hegel 1970 [3], 102)

However, in animals the concept—the genus—is disconnected from the individual. Reproduction is precisely the means by which the animal (or rather the concept using the animal) attempts to bridge this gap, but the effect is not the integration of the particular and the universal, but merely another animal, and then another, and another—in a word, bad infinity (all of this concerns “human animals” as well). The animal’s “immediate, abstract individuality remains permanently in contradiction with its generic universality” (Malabou 2005, 23). As Cinzia Ferrini writes: “In nature, both individual and genus remain confined and closed, each in its own finitude and one-sidedness. There can be no syllogistic mediation between these two extremes. In spirit, by contrast, *our* thought is the universal that is for itself and »immortal«” (Ferrini 2013, 130).

The transition to spirit (or, in the words of Malabou, “second nature”) alone makes the integration of individuality and universality possible. This transition, being both the death and completion of the animal (human or otherwise), frees the concept present in life, sublates its natural externality: “The last self-externality of nature is sublated, so that the Notion, which in nature merely has implicit being, has become for itself” (Hegel 1970 [3], 45). This enables a progression to the next, qualitatively different dimension, that of spirit, which is nature’s truth:

From our point of view mind has for its presupposition Nature, of which it is the truth, and for that reason its absolute prius. In this its truth Nature is vanished, and mind has resulted as the »Idea« entered on possession of itself. (Hegel 1894, 6)

With the transition to spirit, the “dark night of the soul” (St. John of the Cross 1991, 358–361) that was for the concept the passage through nature is over. The concept is no longer consigned to murkiness

and feebleness; thanks to spirit, it can finally assume a form more akin to what it really is.

We now have to leave the valid question: “what does this mean for humans and what is the status of the human in Hegel’s philosophy?” for later. What will be of interest for us now is the fact that the true outside of the idea appears to Hegel only as weakness and dimness. This is because he assumes in advance the primacy of the concept, assumes that the concept is the only thing that exists, or that it is only the conceptual that can be understood—that is, the dimension that presents nothing alien to thought.

The reason for this is the fact that in the internal structure of the concept the subjective moment prevails. According to Marek J. Siemek, the subjective moment

is the most appropriate form of this structure, its fullest and the most adequate shape (...). Putting it a bit maliciously, it is an absolute equality of both moments, the subjective and the objective one, but such that the former is somewhat “more equal” than the latter. (Siemek 1998, 39; my translation)

Deleuze, as we will see, sets himself the objective of constructing a concept in which the subjective moment would not be ‘more equal’ than the objective one—a concept, in which the substance *could not* become subject.

Counting to Two, Counting to Three and the Spontaneity of Thought

Deleuze’s solution to the problem of the relation between the subjective and the objective moment is, I will maintain, different than the Hegelian one. First of all, he proposes to connect these two moments by retaining and affirming their disconnection. In *Logic of Sense* he refers to this movement as disjunctive synthesis:

The divergence of series or the disjunction of members (*membra disjuncta*) cease to be negative rules of exclusion according to which events would be impossible or incompatible. Divergence and disjunction are, on the contrary, affirmed as such. (...) We speak (...) of an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed through their difference (...). We cannot identify contraries, nor can we affirm their entire distance, except as that which relates the one to the other. (Deleuze 1990a, 172–173)

Disjunctive synthesis has its predecessor in Gilbert Simondon's concept of disparation (Deleuze 1994, 147), a concept introduced to describe biological individuation and illustrated with an example of stereoscopic vision:

The term “disparation” (...) which Simondon borrows from the psycho-physiology of perception, refers to the production of depth-perception in binocular vision, and to the incompatibility of retinal images, the irreducible disparity of which produces three-dimensional vision as its creative resolution. Each retina is covered by a two-dimensional image, but the two images do not coincide due to differences in parallax, which one can readily observe by closing one eye at a time. Hence, no two-dimensional image is available to solve what Simondon calls the “axiomatic of two-dimensionality,” that is, the mutual incompatibility of the images. Such an axiomatic, in Simondon's terminology, means the objective structuring of a problematic field (in this case vision), the presentation of a ‘problematic’ or objectively metastable situation requiring a solution. Such a problematic incompatibility is what Simondon intends to capture by his notion of disparation. (...) To attempt to resolve this objective metastability between the two retinas, the human brain integrates it as a condition for the coherence of a new axiomatic, namely three-dimensionality. (Sauvagnargues 2013, 39–40)

Two-dimensional images in both retinas are not overcome, but retained and *as such* they make possible, thanks to the activity of the brain, the perception of depth. This mechanism allows for a kind of progression—or at least the increase of complexity—but they do not guarantee that living forms thus constructed will ever be at home in their environments. This means giving primacy to intuition or the empirical ego—to the objective domain or nature, in a way—but nature here is not the same as the nature envisioned by the proponents of naturalism. It is not a domain of finite, structured organisms and laws governing their behavior, but a domain of intensive differentiations (Baugh 2013, 84–85). Although the creation of an organism always means the alienation, solidification, simplification (Baugh 2013, 83) of these primary structures, they nevertheless cannot do other than to actualize, and their creative capability is still preserved in actualized beings. As Anne Sauvagnargues concludes: “[o]ntology is no longer a matter of the identity of the identity and difference, but of a constructive disparity that stems from a difference that is not reducible from identity” (Sauvagnargues 2013, 39).

Now, we may ask: is this construction really different than the Hegelian movement of the concept? In Hegel, after all, difference is also irreducible to identity! Yet the difference exists—but it is a rather

subtle one. How far must a Hegelian dialectician learn to count?”—asks Slavoj Žižek (2008, 179). Contrary to appearances, this is a serious question. It relates, in fact, to the very essence of the dialectical movement. Žižek tries to prove that, despite the stereotype, the answer is not: “to three (the dialectical triad, and so on)” (Žižek 2008, 179), but to four: at every stage, the movement of the concept contains in itself something to which the various critics of Hegel (Adorno first of all) identified as the domain that is supposed to escape sublation: “the excess of pure nothingness of self-relating negativity which vanishes, becomes invisible, in the final Result” (Žižek 2008, 179). Thus, sublation is never a reconciliation; it never glosses over the lack, the negativity that is the truth of every form.

However, on closer inspection, as Verene notices, it would seem that the right answer is rather two than four (Verene 1998, 215). This is illustrated by the fragments from the “Introduction” to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Hegel analyzes the nature of experience and the way it contains in itself the dialectical movement:

if we inquire into the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is *in itself*. Yet in this inquiry knowledge is *our* object, something that exists *for us*; and the *in-itself* that would supposedly result from it would rather be the being of knowledge for *us*. (Hegel 1977, 55)

Seeking “real” knowledge about the outside world, we double the object of our knowledge into the object in itself and the object for us. It would then seem that in the very beginning of the movement, one encounters two objects: “(w)e see that consciousness now has two objects: one is the first *in-itself*, the second is the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*” (Hegel 1977, 55). However, the second object is not an autonomous element, but only the doubling of the first—the doubling that is the essence of movement:

Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what it previously took to be the *in-itself* is not an *in-itself*; or that it was only an in-itself for *consciousness*. Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is. (Hegel 1977, 54–55)

As Žižek notices, “the second moment is thus not the negative of the first, its otherness; it is the first moment as its own other, as the

negative of itself” (Žižek 2008, 180). Or, in Hegel’s words, “mediation is nothing beyond self-moving selfsameness” (Hegel 1977, 11; see also Siemek 2012, 387–389). The dialectical movement requires above all the reflexive doubling of the object of knowledge; this doubling is possible, because the object is always already correlated with the subject:

But the essential point to bear in mind throughout the whole investigation is that these two moments, “Notion” and “object,” “being-for-another” and “being-in-itself,” both fall *within* that knowledge which we are investigating. Consequently, we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry. (Hegel 1977, 53–54)

This is why the movement of difference, based on disparation, is different from the dialectical movement. Its point of departure is not one element (an original correlation) that undergoes a reflexive doubling, but *two* mutually independent elements; and the moment of the affirmation of their disjunction that sets them in motion constitutes a *third* element.³ Thus, it is Deleuze, not Hegel, who is a thinker of the triad. What is more, the movement from two elements to the third, and all the subsequent moments, are marked by this discontinuity present in the essential mechanism: there is nothing natural, nothing spontaneous, nothing based on the assumed, original correlation, in the movement of difference.

This ontological solution has important consequences for the question of thought’s spontaneity. Deleuze pointed out, using the example of Descartes, that much of the philosophical tradition assumes that thinking is something that comes to us naturally, spontaneously, and that it can therefore serve the function of pre-philosophical ground of philosophy:

everybody knows what it means to think and to be (...) This element consist only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of the faculty, of the presupposition that there is the natural capacity of thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*. (Deleuze 1994, 165–166)⁴

3 This might mean that, if Deleuze is, as Quentin Meillassoux maintains, a correlationist (Meillassoux 2008, 64), his correlationism is very different from the Hegelian one, because it includes in it, by making the thinking subject a particular, situated being, a moment of radical contingency.

4 See also Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 27; Lumsden 2013, 135.

We can say, reservations notwithstanding, that this applies to Hegel as well. Although his idea arrives as self-identity only at the end of its journey, successive stages of this journey are possible because they contain within themselves, in a more or less alienated form, the concept—the correlation of the subject and the object. The mechanism by which successive forms emerge is “spontaneous” and ruled by good will⁵; we can see this at the very beginning of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where it turns out that the object and subject of sense-certainty, seemingly the most immediate of the forms of cognition, are not immediate after all:

When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the I. (Hegel 1977, 59)

On this most basic of levels, when the consciousness does not yet think in the precise sense of the word, the mechanisms responsible for the movement of the concept are already at work. The concept is not only the aim of the movement, but the truth of the whole process, assumed in advance. Things are different for Deleuze, who assumes that no one and nothing thinks spontaneously and in good will: “»Everybody« knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking” (Deleuze 1994, 168; see also Houle and Vernon 2013; Adkins 2013, 14). A thought appears when an organized being (or a subject, not necessarily a human one) is forced to think by a confrontation with the outside that poses for it a problem demanding a solution.

As we can see, this demonstrates the profound differences in Deleuze’s approach to the question of the status of the subject and thought with respect to Hegel; these differences translate, as we will see, to ethical and political solutions. There is nothing original in thought’s correlation of the subjective and the objective, because thought itself is passive, owing its activity to the outside. Thought and the subject/object, or the correlation that allows thinking, is radically contingent⁶; it might

There is nothing original in thought’s correlation of the subjective and the objective, because thought itself is passive, owing its activity to the outside. Thought and the subject/object, or the correlation that allows thinking, is radically contingent; it might not exist at all if it hadn’t been, at some point, in an act that is also contingent, activated by the outside.

5 Spontaneity and good will do not denote any particular emotional content—the fact that thought in Hegel is spontaneous does not mean that it is harmonious or peaceful. Reflexive doubling of the correlation is definitely a violent event, and the Hegelian subject is a tortured, internally conflicted entity. This does not change the fact that this violence is an internal affair.

6 This is perhaps the reason why Deleuze felt the need to “return” to Kantian

not exist at all if it hadn't been, at some point, in an act that is also contingent, activated by the outside.

This means that subject and its concepts are never autonomous, never bear thought out of themselves, irrespectively of the complexity of its organization. It is always dispossessed by its environment and, unlike in Hegel, it will never be "at home" in it. Deleuze describes acts of creation (again, realized by plants and animals as well as humans) as consequences of this encounter with the outside that forces a transformation on subjects. An object or an organism will always be secondary to the outside; it is not a truth of nature, but its product (Baugh 2013, 76; Houle and Vernon 2013). It is the outside, or the virtual, that remains the substance—non-subjective and producing all subjects, although most of the time this is not expressed in the form and contents of ordinary experience. This outside and the virtual might also be called nature—in its two aspects, *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, creating and created nature (nevertheless this duality constitutes one substance) (Deleuze 1990b, 14).

This does not mean that the thinking subject is condemned to fatalist acceptance of its contingency. The whole project of Deleuzian ethics has as its aim a delineation of the ways the subject—which does not have to become, because it already exists as a particular product of nature—can become something other than the subject.⁷ The subject can, in other words, try to be like nature, like the substance—an entity that is *not* a subject (see Spinoza 1994, 253–254). This is the aim of thinking, or becoming, or creation (an activity that encompasses not only philosophy or science, but also politics and art)—a "creative involution" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 185; Hansen 2000), a movement of desubjectification. This desubjectification is also the factor that makes the overcoming of anthropocentrism possible.

Anthropocentrism Is Not a Humanism

We may ask at this point: but weren't all the above remarks based on bad will towards Hegel? Wouldn't good will ultimately be more productive? Moved by good will, couldn't we actually prove that this Deleuzian

critique, and to combine this return with invocation of pre-transcendental ontologies of Spinoza and Leibniz: this movement allowed him to retain the finitude of the subject. However, the assumption of being's immanence permitted him not to treat this finitude as something absolute.

7 This substance is, of course, modelled on the God of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

movement of desubjectification is already possible on the grounds of Hegelian philosophy?

This seems to be the path Malabou chooses in *The Future of Hegel*. Reading Hegel through the concept of plasticity⁸ allows her to present the Hegelian system as an ontology of difference and contingency. According to this interpretation, the concept is a paradoxical category that is endowed with the power both to give and receive form, or a power of schematization (Malabou 2005, 5, 8, 12, 18):

Within the process of self-determination, the universal (the substance) and particular (the accidents as something independent) give form to each other through a dynamic like that at play in the “plastic individualities.” The process of self-determination is the unfolding of the *substance-subject*. In the process, substance withdraws from itself in order to enter into the particularity of its content. (Malabou 2005, 11)

The alleged teleology of the Hegelian system is actually an anticipative structure (*voir venir*—“to see coming”; see Malabou 2005, 185, 194) which makes the dialectic radically open to the future, although with the awareness that “everything already happened” (Malabou 2005, 192)—the orientation towards the future, the anticipation of the future, is always heavy with the weight of the past, shaped by the past. This is the real meaning of absolute knowledge (Malabou 2005, 183).

This approach to Hegel constitutes one of the most daring attempts to present the relation of the subjective and the objective moment as mutual co-constitution—symmetry, or mutual asymmetry, with no prevalence of the subjective. However, does *The Future of Hegel* really manage to prove this? I have doubts. The way Malabou treats the question of Man/the human is a symptom of the fact that the prevalence of the subjective diagnosed by Siemek subsists also in her interpretation.

Malabou describes the transition from nature to spirit in terms surprisingly similar to the ones used by scholars like Ferrini, Wandschneider or Posch, who want to remain “faithful” to Hegel. The spirit, according to her, is constituted as a “second nature” (Malabou 2005, 26),⁹ created

8 As Malabou demonstrates, the word “plasticity” appears in the texts of Hegel in key places, providing the vantage point that allows to see the whole system in a new light (Malabou 2005, 5).

9 This term appears also in Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, although Debord ascribes to it a more traditionally humanist meaning, stating that “Man’s appropriation of his own nature is at the same time his grasp of the development of the universe” (Debord 1992, 73).

as a consequence of the processes of the formation and folding of habit, common to all life (Malabou 2005, 157–158). Habit—which we may also name the force of self-organization—is “a process whereby the psychic and the somatic are translated into one another” (Malabou 2005, 26).¹⁰ This translation occurs in all living beings, although with the human (or rather Man, because we are not speaking here simply about the human animal) we encounter something special, an additional movement of folding of the natural fold—the arrival of Man marks the entrance of habit into another dimension, that of spirit:

the transition from nature to spirit occurs not as a sublation, but as a *reduplication*, a process through which spirit constitutes itself in and as a *second nature*. This reflexive reduplication is in a certain sense the “mirror stage” of spirit, in which the first form of its identity is constituted. (Malabou 2005, 26)

As we have already seen, reflexive reduplication is what constitutes the dialectical movement; nothing is added with the reduplication, what happens is only that the first moment (here: nature) relates to itself, or, using Deleuzian language, folds in on itself. Malabou’s take on the transition to spirit is then no different from the orthodox Hegelian one. What is more, she also stresses that the animal life is only an elementary, insufficient form of habit¹¹: “we can recognize in the animal an elementary form of seeing what is coming, of the *voir venir*. Need, appetite, desire, the accumulation of such retentions and expectations, are themselves proof of the fact that the animal is concerned to ensure the perpetuation of its own life” (Malabou 2005, 64); however, “(b)ecause the individual animal is nothing but a natural accident it can only respond to the genus in its substance by means of another accident: the generation of another animal” (Malabou 2005, 73). The development of subjectivity makes the passage to Man necessary: “Man’s potential to duplicate his nature emerges from this as the defining anthropological attribute” (Malabou 2005, 57). Only with Man it is that “Subjectivity, henceforth capable of appropriating difference to itself, now appears as

10 We can notice here that Malabou’s description of habit is very similar to passages on habit from Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994, 70–79). Indeed, Malabou draws on Deleuze in her interpretation of Hegel, which allows her to present the author of *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a thinker of the processes of natural self-organization, as well as to prove how indebted to Hegel Deleuze was.

11 “A profound thought or conception of animal life animates this entire book” (Malabou 2005, xvii)—states Derrida in the preface to *The Future of Hegel*. This is true—but this conception is, ultimately, faithful to Hegel’s conception, in which the animal being is inevitably insufficient.

what it truly is: the originary synthetic unity linking its determinations and, at the same moment, putting them into sequential form” (Malabou 2005, 38).

We are now on the familiar field of the Lacanian interpretation of Hegel’s anthropology, made known most notably by Žižek (2008, 99–140): “it is language that could act as the cutting edge between the death of the animal and the birth of man” (Malabou 2005, 65). Because of this, “(h)uman »nature« is, for Hegel, always and already »second nature«” (Malabou 2005, 66), that is, a lack of nature, lack established where nature, essence or substance should be. Man is this doubling of the void of essence: “Man sees himself being seen and seeing: he has become doubled and, at the same time, multiplied perspectivally” (Malabou 2005, 67). “Human habitus signifies the fact that it signifies nothing” (Malabou 2005, 67). “Man appears as the being who must come to experience the nonreferentiality of expression, or, in other words, signification’s impossible state of nature” (Malabou 2005, 68).

Human nature, then, is the lack of nature; human essence is the lack of essence: “Man does not have a substance. There is no human substance” (Malabou 2005, 75). Exceptionality of Man is established here, again, on the new ground: the lack of ground. Is this really so groundbreaking? Or is it the same old tune of Man’s uniqueness?

But maybe this vision of Man gives way to something else in Malabou’s interpretation? Man in Hegel is, after all, only the first incarnation of spirit, which proves insufficient to its full realization. The subjective spirit has to give way to objective and absolute spirit. The place of anthropology in the Hegelian system is thus the place of a transitional moment. As Malabou stresses: “Just as Hegel’s notion of habit cannot be called anthropological, so his use of man as paradigm does not include an anthropologizing notion of substance. In truth, what is exemplary about man is less human-ness than his status as an *insistent accident*” (Malabou 2005, 73).

Still, I will claim that although Hegel is definitely not a humanist, and his ontology is not dominated by anthropology, it is nevertheless anthropocentric. What does this mean? In “The Ends of Man” Jacques Derrida introduces the distinction between humanism or anthropologism and the trace of the prevalence of Man connected to teleology or ontoteology:

Whatever decisive breaks from classical anthropologies may be indicated by this Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian anthropology, there is no interruption in a metaphysical familiarity which so naturally relates the we of the philosopher to “we-men,” to the we of the total horizon of humanity. (Derrida 1969, 35)

With regard to Hegel, Derrida stresses that “*The Phenomenology of Mind* (...) is in no way concerned with something which could be called man” (Derrida 1969, 37). Yet

the relations between anthropology and phenomenology are not, according to Hegel, relations of mere exteriority. With all that they introduce, the Hegelian concepts of truth, negativity and *Aufhebung relève* prevent this from being so. (Derrida 1969, 40)

Because of this, anthropology cannot, of course, be the ultimate truth of Hegel’s system; it remains only a place of transition, subject to *Aufhebung* or a subsequent folding: “(c)onsciousness is the truth of man; phenomenology is the truth of anthropology (...); phenomenology is the *relève* of anthropology” (Derrida 1969, 41). Derrida continues: “In this sense all of the structure described in the *Phenomenology of Mind*—just as everything which links them with Logic—are the structures of what has taken over for man” (Derrida 1969, 41). Man is something that is being surpassed. Just as nature is being surpassed in spirit, so Man is being surpassed by society and philosophy. This surpassing, however, also means preserving:

This equivocality of the relation of *relève* undoubtedly marks the end of man, of man past, but at the same time it marks the completion of man, the appropriation of his essence (...). The idea of the end of man is then always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thought of the truth of man. (Derrida 1969, 42)

The surpassing of Man still means we stay on the terrain of “human reality.” The uniqueness of Man is being qualified here, it undergoes deconstruction, it sheds the naïve list of traits that were used in the past to explain human exceptionality (reason, play, use of tools—only language remains, as a domain that establishes human essence by depriving Man of any essence). Nonetheless, these changes do nothing to destabilize the anthropocentric assumption that a certain ideal reality—whether we call it language, thought, culture or spirit—accomplishes something that nature is of necessity unable to accomplish. This reality uses human animals and the institutions they build as its incarnations, granting Man advantage over animals (though not necessarily ensuring the wellbeing of all human animals). And it is this assumption that lies at the foundation of anthropocentrism.

Granting special status to anthropology is not the sole factor distinguishing anthropocentric ontologies. On the contrary, as antihumanist

philosophies became popular (Derrida describes the first signs of this shift in “The Ends of Man”), antihumanism is the form in which anthropocentric thought most often appears. We might even say that it renders the structure of anthropocentrism more fully than ordinary humanism or anthropologism, revealing the fact that it consists in overcoming the human animal, transforming it into Man. The fact that Hegel, long before the poststructuralist turn, established the structure of this anthropocentrism is further proof of the significance of his conceptual innovations. But it is also proof of the inherently anthropocentric character of his thought. Malabou’s reading, aimed at downplaying the role of Man in Hegel’s thought, ultimately does something opposite—it demonstrates that the sublation of the human is precisely the mechanism at the heart of anthropocentric approach.

We can assume, in simplified terms, that the question of humanism is connected to the way a philosopher solves the problem of the relation between the human as a particular, natural being, as human animal—an empirical ego in Kantian terms—and the human as a bearer or an envelope of a fragile treasure, a thing that is not really human, but that can take root only in the human—Reason, Concept, Idea, Thought. It is a parasite or rather a symbiont for the human, a thing that transforms a human animal into Man. If, as Michel Serres states, the human is a parasite (Serres 1982), this is only possible because first it is a host to Thought/Concept/Reason.

The starting point of the evolution of this dualism in modernity is the Cartesian solution, in which the human is simply identical with his parasite or symbiont, and particular, empirical part of the human—the body—can be made an object of scientific investigation just like the rest of matter or extended substance. Then things get more complicated: the problem of the empirical ego and the transcendental ego, posed and solved by Kant in a way that bears the traces of dualism (Deleuze 1994, 108–109; Lumsden 2013, 139) became a point of departure for numerous solutions proposed by the representatives of German speculative thought, like Fichte or Schelling. Hegel, dissatisfied with these solutions, proposed his own version of the problem, aimed at overcoming the dichotomy of empirical and transcendental ego without assuming in advance the primacy of the latter (Lumsden 2013, 138–139; Angelova 2013; Widder 2013). However, his solution is based on the statement that the empirical ego or the human animal contains in itself the spirit as its truth, expressed in external form. This makes Hegel an anti-humanist (like the later Lacan, Althusser or Meillassoux), if we contend that humanism equals the view that the human animal does not need to

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become a host to Reason—that it is perfectly capable of thinking on its own (this is the position of Feuerbach or sociobiologists). Spirit, on the contrary, means, among other things, overcoming the human animal. Hegel is therefore, like Lacan, Althusser or Meillassoux, an anti-humanist. Still, the anthropocentrism present in humanist ontologies is not overcome, but strengthened in the anti-humanist vision that is centred on the sublation of the human animal.¹²

The Abolition of Man

This issue has consequences for the question of the end of Man and its relation to pro-animal politics. Although the need to develop anti-anthropocentric theories and practices has been addressed and answered many times (Haraway 2008; Wolfe 2003; Calarco 2008), the problem of how to think and act in a non-anthropocentric way is still far from being solved. The Deleuzian perspective is especially promising in this context, in view of the way some representatives of new materialism and object-oriented ontology try to solve the problem of the end of Man. Often they attempt to get rid of Man by simply dissolving him in the whole of Matter or by stating that he is just one object among all the other objects (Bennett 2009; Bryant 2011). The practical effect of this movement is an erasure of the asymmetry of power between Man and other living beings. It's a shortcut that leads us straight to our point of departure. It's not an easy or simple thing to get rid of Man. This doesn't, however, mean that all we can hope for is, as Derrida proposes (Derrida 2002), neverending twilight, the protracted departure of Man. We can and should become something other than Man—and the concept of becoming-animal from *A Thousand Plateaus* may prove to be a valuable tool for this endeavor.

For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not “really” become an animal any

12 Among the interpreters of Hegel, it is Adorno who is the closest to questioning the Hegelian perspective, stating for example that we should “see all nature, and whatever would install itself as such, as history, and all history as nature” and mentioning “the painful antithesis of nature and history” (Adorno 2004, 359). However, by concluding that “(t)he moment in which nature and history become commensurable with each other is the moment of passing” (Adorno 2004, 359), he mostly wastes this opportunity to explore the possibility of a different approach to nature and history.

more than the animal “really” becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 238)

Becoming-animal is a clear example of the movement of difference—characterized by disparation—at work: the two terms, animal and human, with which we start, are separate and irreducible to each other; we might even say that they do not enter into actual contact, because the whole affair happens on the molecular level.¹³ It is, nonetheless, not a reflexive doubling of the animality of the human animal, the animality internal to the human¹⁴; the animal, although a molecular one, is real and external to the human. Yet this separatedness, by being affirmed, produces something new: becoming-animal, a movement that transforms both the human and the animal.

Although becoming-animal was criticized (Haraway 2008) (and sometimes favorably presented; see MacCormack 2020) for concerning only humans and their human, all too human artistic practices, and as not having anything to do with actual animals, with animal rights or with pro-animal politics more broadly, it may be interpreted as a concept whose aim is to dismantle Man—in a non-illusory, cautious and effective way. Becoming-animal is one of the practices that allow the stratified, structured human subject to come into contact with the outside—it is a local, partial contact, because we can never directly experience the virtual as a given, but it makes possible creative involution (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 164), a process that allows for the emergence of the new in art and politics.

We should, perhaps, at this point juxtapose the Hegelian charge that becoming-animal is a form of bad infinity, formulated by Malabou in “Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?”. This would mean that it is both harmful and illusory—harmful, because illusory, a quasi-movement inferior to dialectical reflexive doubling. Malabou states that becoming-animal, which “subverts both filiation and reproduction” (Malabou 1996, 125) is “absolutely different from the becoming of

13 Which does not mean that on the molar level becoming-animal cannot have the form of interaction between an actual human and an actual animal.

14 Such a reflexive doubling of human animality is the way Giorgio Agamben chooses in order to overcome anthropocentrism (Agamben 2004, 12, 26–27, 76–77).

the animal, oriented as the latter is towards reproduction, tending towards the stasis of the being that has become, obeying the rule of the multiple in the reassuring figure of the one” (Malabou 1996, 129), and also that “it does not teleologically accomplish the movement of an individual life” (Malabou 1996, 129). Therefore, she criticizes Deleuze’s “refusal to recognize lack as the driving force behind becoming” (Malabou 1996, 130). This exclusion of lack leads him to imposing on becoming an external limit—God, the One, a theological closure that is absent in Hegel, “(d)epri[ving] becoming of any immanent amounts to limiting it from outside as Hegel argues in the Doctrine of Being” (Malabou 1996, 130)—limitation from outside being much more repressive than the movement of the negative, which actually frees what it sublates.¹⁵

Malabou refuses to consider two things. First, the organization of the animal organism by the contraction of habit (the becoming of the animal) and becoming are not absolutely different in the ontological sense, because they take place on the same plane (the assumption of immanence). The animal that becomes (evolves) can also enter becoming as creative involution, because there is no absolute separation between these two directions of movement. Second, becoming *has* its internal limit in the form of becoming-imperceptible.

If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279)

It is “coming at the end of all the molecular becomings that begin with becoming-woman” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279). Deleuze and Guattari call it also becoming “like everybody else” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279), which is, appearances notwithstanding, the opposite of conformity: it is coming into contact with the whole world:

15 Because of this Malabou contrasts Deleuze and Guattari’s account of becoming-animal with the account of becoming of the animal through habit from *Difference and Repetition*, which is, as we have already seen, closer to the Hegelian approach. Thus, she follows Badiou and Žižek in contrasting Deleuze’s single-authored works to the ones co-written with Guattari. Whereas the former deserve cautious approval, the latter are condemned as crude “empirionism” (Žižek 2004, 19–26) devoid of any conceptual innovation (Badiou 2000, 5).

becoming everybody/everything is another affair, one that brings into play the cosmos with its molecular components. Becoming everybody/everything (*tout le monde*) is to world (*faire monde*), to make a world (*faire un monde*). (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279–280)

Becoming-animal is the step leading to this stage, in which the human is no longer Man; what is more, in the present context we may regard it as a crucial stage, because the way humans treat other animals indicates a tangle of theoretical and practical assumptions humans have about the animality both of “non-human animals” and their own animality, which exists only to be overcome. Patricia MacCormack’s suggestion to read becoming-animal as a procedure leading to the abolition of Man shows what is at stake—the abolition of Man, which will free both human and non-human animals:

man must pass through inhumanity towards ethics (...) there are escape routes from humanism which may encourage ethical relations, not by knowing, fetishizing or making an idea of an animal, but because when there is no human there is no deferral to human signifying systems. (MacCormack 2014, 1–2; see also MacCormack 2020, 14–15, 84–85)

The disappearance of Man doesn’t have to mean the literal extinction of humans; it rather refers to stepping back, making space for other animals to live: “Non-parasitic recognition is the turning away with grace, making no demands of the addressee’s face; exchange comes from disanchoring the parasitic human and reciprocity is human absence” (MacCormack 2014, 6).

This is in accordance with the postulates of abolitionism, a perspective claiming that the main tenet of animal liberation is the abolition of animals’ status as property, recognizing that animals owe us nothing and we have no right to use them in any way (Francione and Charlton 2020). Although this approach is in many ways better than the utilitarian perspective, it may lead to some problematic conclusions. Among them is the opinion, proclaimed by some abolitionists, that we should aim at the complete elimination of relations between humans and other animals. This may lead to the position that domesticated animals should simply cease to exist, which is a conclusion I wouldn’t want to uphold. Thus as a necessary correction to the abolitionist stance we may propose supplementing it with Sue Donaldson’s and Will Kymlicka’s concept of relational rights and duties toward animals, introduced in *Zoopolis*:

What would it mean to be human when we finally stop defining ourselves by degrading other animals? (...) Probably nothing other than the human animal, as many philosophical definitions-by-privation assert; but in the meantime “the animal” would also change its meaning and would no longer denote something merely living, something less than human.

duties arising not just from the intrinsic characteristics of animals (such as their consciousness), but from the more geographically and historically specific relationships that have developed between particular groups of humans and particular groups of animals. For example, the fact that humans have deliberately bred domesticated animals to become dependent on us generates different moral obligations to cows or dogs than we have to the ducks or squirrels who migrate to areas of human settlement. (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 6)

Our duties towards different groups of animals are based not on the traits of these groups, but on the historical relations between them and humans.¹⁶ It’s also important that stepping back will definitely not mean abandoning animals to their fate; on the contrary, it will mean, as Eva Meijer puts it, “creating space for them to articulate (their—J.B.) good in their own ways” (Meijer 2019, 204).

Such interventions, aimed at creating the conditions for the freedom of non-human animals, will also radically change the status of the human. What would it mean to be human when we finally stop defining ourselves by degrading other animals? Most likely: less than Man, the host of Reason, but also something other than Man, the naturally evolved apex predator (as the quasi-naturalist approaches, grounded less in biology than in right-wing ideology, would have it). Probably nothing other than the human animal, as many philosophical definitions-by-privation assert; but in the meantime “the animal” would also change its meaning and would no longer denote something merely living, something less than human. It would rather mean: a product of the virtual, a contraction of habits and affects, local stability; a being inhabiting a world where, like in Alain Badiou’s nightmare, there are only bodies and languages (Badiou 2009, 1). The only thing distinguishing humans would probably be more responsibility—defined as being host not to thought, but to other living beings (MacCormack 2014, 186).

We might even risk the proposition that such a world and such a status of the human animal in this world is the true meaning of this mysterious idea of Hegel: absolute knowledge, understood not as a return of the concept to itself, but as, as Juliette Simont writes, bringing “Earthiness back to oneself thanks to differentiation, furthering the Earth’s individuality by and within the circulation of the elements” (Simont 2013, 181–182); although, contrary to her, it would not equal a neces-

16 We should note that this proposition met with a critique—Eva Meijer, though she accepts in general the concept of relational duties, points out that classification proposed by Donaldson and Kymlicka (wild, domesticated and liminal animals) may be impossible to uphold (Meijer 2019, 117–118, 136–141).

sity to “detach ourselves from our human footing and adopt the absolute vantage point of this luminous streak” (Simont 2013, 182). It would mean acting with awareness of our limitations and partiality, as well as of the necessity of numerous, far-reaching interventions we will have to undertake. This return of Earth to itself will most likely look more like a departure with no return—because no being, not even Earth herself, can ever be at home.

In other words, it seems that it is not possible to envisage a Hegelian ontology which would not at the same time be anthropocentric. Although Malabou demonstrates that Hegel was not a thinker of the Same and closure, but a thinker of Difference and openness towards the future, this future can only be thought as a human one—or more precisely as a future of Man, eternally deconstructing his essence. It is only with Deleuze and Guattari that we encounter the possibility of overcoming Man and envisaging different relations between the human animal, other animals and the whole Earth.

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Tytuł: Położyć kres „Człowiekowi”: Natura i człowiek u Hegła, stawanie-się-zwierzęciem i abolicjonizm

Abstrakt: Artykuł ma na celu rekonstrukcję różnicy między ontologiami Hegła i Deleuze’a. Zagadnienie natury i Człowieka w obu filozofiach pozwala dostrzec fundamentalną ontologiczną niezgodność obu filozofii. Według Hegła natura jest zarazem prawdziwie zewnętrzna względem idei i stanowi (jako taka) moment w ruchu pojęcia, który pozwala mu stać się tym, czym ono jest. Deleuze z kolei powraca do ontologii przedkantowskiej, nie porzucając transcendentalnego poziomu analizy. Pozwala mu to przyznać naturze prawdziwą zewnętrzność, a tym samym przekształcić dialektykę w mechanizm otwarcia na niewyczerpalne zewnętrzne, nie zaś mechanizm potwierdzania prymatu pojęcia. Przypadek stawania-się-zwierzęciem ukazuje polityczne konsekwencje tego ontologicznego wyboru: można je bowiem rozumieć jako sposób na położenie kresu „Człowiekowi”, co stanowi przedsięwzięcie zgodne z celami abolicjonizmu.

Słowa kluczowe: antropocentryzm, człowiek, Deleuze i Guattari, Hegel, natura