

# ■ Deleuze's Ethology: Plane of Immanence and the Impersonal

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to address the Deleuzian theory of ecology by exploring Gilles Deleuze's ethological concepts of the "plane of immanence" and the "impersonal" which are based on Deleuze's "body without organs" model. In so doing, this paper attempts to explain that ecology is not merely concerned with the protection of other species, nor is it about conservation techniques. Instead, it is an ethic that concerns the duration of life and therefore, according to Deleuze, ecology belongs neither to the realm of ecology nor ethics, but rather to ethology, which contains both. Thus it is necessary to first gain a thorough understanding of Deleuze's ethological principles in order to further explore his theories on ecology. The body without organs, creative as it is, subverts ecological concepts, demonstrating a derealizing thinking. This is precisely Deleuze's philosophical task, and so he posits, "Is not the great work on the body without organs just the ethics?" Here, he reveals a direction towards which one must strive: to make oneself become the body without organs, i.e., an inner exploration and external experience of life, which renders the self and the world both immanent and transcendent. He emphasizes that the world's true nature is to become a world without rules, rather than the actual and striated world as it is now. This does not suggest that the world is nihilistic and chaotic, but that the world is breaking out of the rules that constrain it to further express itself. By doing so, the world is becoming an infinite singularity. Deleuze's con-

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cept of the plane of immanence, teeming with difference and singularity, is the world as it is. Hence, he contends that the radical meaning of the body without organs as a becoming-animal is the realizing potential, ensuring the possibility of the self and the world to be constantly becoming and actualizing.

**Keywords:** body without organs, plane of immanence, impersonal, ethology, becoming

## Deleuze's Ethology,<sup>1</sup> Plane of Immanence and the Impersonal

Our notions of ecology, for the most part, stop at environmental activism concerned with how to decrease pollution, develop new energy sources, and protect scarce materials. Moreover, ecologists are regarded as those who merely consume self-cultivated, organic food and favor recycling. However, as Serge Moscovici urges, ecological considerations are only one part of man's reconsideration of nature. Ecology concerns itself with all existents; its primary purpose is to ensure that all existents thrive in and are sustained by their habitats, that they maintain vitality, activity, and creativity, as well as the well-known formula: equality (*égalité*) = balance (*équilibre*) – ecology (*écologie*). M. Morin also asserts that ecology is the study of the interlocked relations between human beings and the environment. This means that ecology is not some isolated incident with an ecological background, but an emphasis on the system in which mankind lives and with which mankind develops a certain sort of relationship.

Ecology is thus defined, on the whole, as a space wherein various species and their living environments are mutually connected. Each ecosystem can be exchanged with another ecosystem, which in turn regenerates other ecosystems. Furthermore, an "ecosystem" is like a plane of differences, which aggregates and constitutes complex molecules with diverse elements. This complex relationship is not only based upon interdependent relationships, but also upon parasitic, antagonistic, and competitive relationships. It ensures the necessity and stability of life. In summary, ecology is not only involved with the conservation of natural biology, modern scientific determinism, and ecological engineering and technology; instead, it is also related to thinking about our entire living environment. Therefore, it raises questions such as how different species are able to have close attachment and appropriate balance, or how the complex relationship and its intensity coexist.

The Deleuzian theory of ecology addresses such questions by utilizing the concepts of "plane of immanence" and the "impersonal," which will now be

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<sup>1</sup> Deleuze contends that Spinoza's ethics are emphatically devoted to affect, indicating that affect is the latitude of body. From affect, the *puissance* of body can be judged in terms of its level and limit. Hence, we can avoid the attempt of defining body in accordance with its organs or function, and avoid another attempt of defining body's characteristics in accordance with its species and genre. Instead, we can define body in accordance with affect, that is, its intensity and relationships. Deleuze regards the research on affect as ethology, or true ethics (*Mille Plateaux* 313). This concept is also mentioned in *Spinoza: philosophie pratique* (167-71). Note that *Mille Plateaux* and *Spinoza: philosophie pratique* will be henceforth be respectively abbreviated as *MP* and *SPhP*. Also, the English version of *Spinoza: philosophie pratique* will be rendered as *SPPh*.

addressed in order to explore how Deleuze arrives at ethology,<sup>2</sup> which transcends human-centered ontology, through his ideas of becoming, creativity, and duration. To do so, this study expands upon Deleuze's discussions of ecology in his theoretical discourses. According to Deleuze, ecology belongs neither to the realm of ecology nor ethics, but rather *ethology*, which contains both. Deleuze states that "[e]thology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing" (*SPPh* 125; *SPhP* 168). Accordingly, if we see the Earth as the scope of the activity of all beings, then so-called "ecology" is actually the dynamic emergences and changes between speed and slowness, between strong and weak, among those beings. There is no reproduction in these relationships, nor are they hereditary. Every encounter, contagion, or assemblage generates and brings about another difference and genesis. Thus, they are neither biological nor ethical, but ethological.

Here allow me to elaborate my understanding of Deleuze's notion of ecology in order to help have a clearer framework of the paper. From Deleuze's description, Spinoza's ethics as ethology relies on the fact that it is an immanent plane, which aims at analyzing the relationship between speed and slowness of things as well as their features influenced and impacted. That is, ethology is different from the composition between relationships or characteristics. The intertwining composition is intensity of an anonymous force, which is always

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, there is an important Marxist tradition in the discussion on ethology in France, which is called "radical ecologism" (*l'écologisme radical*). The leading thinkers are André Gorz, Michel Bosquet, Edgar Morin, Alain Lipietz, Serge Moscovici, René Dumont, Dominique Lecourt, Michaël Löwy, Serge Latouche, Daniel Bensaïd, etc. These prominent figures play an important role in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and economics. They advocate that the space where we live is already an ecology, including society. They criticize capitalism and modern technology, both of which bring an imbalance to human existence, especially within human-led social institutions and development. Hence, they have dedicated themselves to everyday social movements, so called "Ecosocialism." André Gorz's *Capitalisme, socialisme, écologie*, and his works co-authored with Michel Bosquet, *Écologie et politique* and *Écologie et liberté*, are important classical works on ecology in France. Michaël Löwy emphasizes that the ecological crisis caused by current capitalism does not only stem from the supply-demand problem of desire, but also from the internal conflicts inherent in capitalism which lead to a lack of internal regulation in capitalism thereby destroying the circular capability of ecological balance. He further indicates that "ecologism" may be a means of production that can transform capitalism and create an alternative paradigm shifting away from the modern Western capitalistic/industrial model. Furthermore, this new method of production must possess sustaining characteristics (M. Löwy, *Écosocialisme, L'alternative radicale à la catastrophe écologique planétaire*). Dominique Lecourt, starting from a posthumanistic standpoint, contends that the threat of the bio-catastrophism resulting from bio-technology can no longer be resolved by Nietzsche's "Overman" or Marx's "international solidarity." Instead, we have to take into consideration the standard (*l'aune*) of posthumanity, a pure inhumanity. Deleuze's critique on capitalism provides an important source of ethology as well. However, since the theme of this paper revolves around the axis of ethics, the issue of capitalism in relation to ecology must be suspended for the moment.

changing, and constantly revised, composed, and recomposed by the individual and community. Deleuze thus states that “Spinoza’s ethics has nothing to do with a morality; he conceives it as an ethology, that is, as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence” (*SPPh* 168; *SPhP* 125). In addition, Spinoza’s ethics, Deleuze contends, is always engaged with a relationship—enormous, complicated, incessantly emerging, and becoming—that portrays the faces of the total Nature (*facies totius Naturae*),<sup>3</sup> an infinite mode (*Critique et clinique* 177). To summarize, Spinoza’s ethics suggests the relationships of intensities, such as the complicated relationship intertwined by the speed and slowness among the perceptions, function, anti-function and so forth. The affect demonstrated by the different relationship is the face of Nature, that is, the world, a plane of immanence of difference.

Ecology is a complex assemblage whose nature cannot be described simply in terms of heredity or kinship. On the contrary, its becoming and multiplying (*multiplier*) are complex and heterogeneous. Becoming is the interconnectedness of a specific system, which transcends the formation itself. Becoming aims not at reaching a form, but at discovering adjacent, indiscernible or non-distinctive zones. This means humans are no longer able to be fixated upon or categorized as women, molecules, or animals, for example. It is not about indefiniteness or generalization, but about unforeseeability and non-preexistence. Because of the manifestation of their specificities in respective groups, it is much more difficult for their fixed forms to be ensured (*CC* 11). It is only through becoming that various existents no longer related by heredity will continue in creation, and this creation implies the possibility of completely different existents affecting each other (*MP* 291).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze explains the becoming of all things in the world by using the paradigm of rhizome to communicate the principles of connection and heterogeneity. He stresses that becoming is a connection and a symbiosis rather than a hereditary relationship; it is aggregated by different substances with one another. Radically speaking, the space that the study of Deleuzian ecology explores is not a specific geographical location, but rather one type of milieu, which is always without form (*informel*). Such a milieu is a non-space in which various differences overlap, coexist, and disseminate, and is a territory in which the relationship between all kinds of existents appear (*SPhP* 171). As such, ethology suggests a more primitive, practical science that deals more with

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<sup>3</sup> *Critique et clinique* will henceforth be abbreviated as *CC*.

reality, or an attitude proceeding from a purely ontological point of view. In contrast, ecology is concerned with the problems of a living environment. That is, it takes as its considerations, first the modus which can lead to the coexistence of differences, as well as how a different multiplicity can maintain the individual singularity in this environment of coexistence; second, the maintenance of diversity of appearance in the cross section of the relationship between these differences; and, finally, the conditions for maintaining sustained existence.

In other words, the possibility of ecological studies lies primarily in the need for multiple species, in addition to the provision of a territory wherein multiple differences can coexist and co-share. For this reason, ecological considerations are in fact a composition of concerns over the relationships between differences and similarities and the environment. Furthermore, these relationships generate a multitude of differences on the one hand, and create an environment in which more differences coexist on the other. Here, ecological considerations are simply a question of differences and similarities. Thus, differences and coexistence become a core component of ecology.

Ethology, in this vein, is not made to prohibit, stagnate, or to suppress life. Rather, it renews life with dynamic forces and movements. It is among these kinetic forces that the environment of coexistence is created. This connotes the urgency for humans to recover the multiplicity of life and reject the suppression of unity. Deleuze claims: "It is always a question of freeing life wherever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into an uncertain combat." Thus, the logic of ecology does not divide humanity and the realm of nature, but rather opens up the possibility for the various unique forms to unfold within the relationship created at the point of interconnection and to find their own unique existence in the environment of coexistence and similarity (*What Is Philosophy?* 171; *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* 162).<sup>4</sup> It is this understanding that leads Deleuze to conceptualize how ecology can be a non human-centric ethics (*MP* 313; *SPhP* 168).

### **Ecology: The Plane of Difference for Composition and Multiplicity**

Ecology, as discussed above, is an ethical discipline concerning the problems of the environment, the manner in which various differences coexist, and the conditions necessary for protecting and sustaining this existence within the

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<sup>4</sup> *What Is Philosophy?* will henceforth be abbreviated as *WIP*, and its French version *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* will be as *QPH*.

environment of multiple differences. In other words, there must first of all be a multiplicity of different substances to make ecology possible and workable. In addition, the sufficient provision of an environment wherein this multiplicity in differences can coexist is necessary. Various heterogeneous substances intermingle within this environment of coexistence, but these differences still belong to a (sub)system within the environment mutually constructed/influenced by one another. Deleuze believes ecology formed through an evolutionary process wherein various differences infected each other through contagion and presented a relationship of disunification and discordance. Furthermore, within ecology there are as many kinds of sexes as there are constructed symbiotic items and the number of intervening elements in the process of contagion is equal to the number of differences (*MP* 296).

In this sense, ecological thoughts are the synthesis of all relationships between thoughts on differences and the environment. The sum total of these relationships not only produces more differences, but also creates the space wherein these differences can coexist. Thus, Deleuze asserts: "the world itself is only a plane of immanence full of differences and singularities" and "if evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of symbioses that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation" (*ATP* 238; *MP* 291). All in all, ecology, in an attempt to solve the questions of difference and coexistence, is a whole that cannot be divided by any norm. Ecology, which is comprised of more than certain conditions or varieties and the preservation of each species, centers on the environment and conditions required by all the beings to survive.

Deleuze's understanding of ecology as an evolutionary process as discussed above, also led him to conclude that Darwin's theory of evolution has a "double deepening" (*ATP* 48; *MP* 63). The theory of evolution explains biological types from the collective and diverse standpoint, while biological development is explained through speed and difference. As a result, clusters are not the result of scientific statistics or differentiation. On the contrary, in an open environment, they have a relatively free status without any prior default. This embryonic-type or nomadic knowledge brings forth changing boundaries of groups or variations of multiplicities. In this case, creatures are a series of infinite variability, as well as variations of a segment of the sequence. Thus any type of positioning marker is impossible. He states: "Life on earth appears as a sum of relatively independent species of flora and fauna with sometimes shifting or porous boundaries among them. Geographical areas can only harbor a sort of chaos, or, at best, extrinsic harmonies of an ecological order, temporary equilibriums between populations" (*ATP* 48; *MP* 63).

In short, for Deleuze, the complex relationships between beings constitute ecology, which is a readily mutated and border-changing multiple constitution. Furthermore, in addition to creating difference relations among individuals, it is also a re-linking between the individuals and the environment. Therefore, the more multiple the group is, the more it is able to differentiate different types of diversity. To sum up, the individuals are multiple, and the relations among the individuals are multiple, too. It is these multilayers of relations that compose the different and double natural planes, and thus ecology constitutes interleaved strata.<sup>5</sup>

As such, ecology is a plane full of differences; it is a plane of composition on which different existents coexist. This implies that ecology does not begin as an organ or a subject, but rather as the relationship between speed, movement and stillness, fast and slow. Deleuze refers to the individual without a subject (*individu sans sujet*) as body without organs, or as the plane of nature, which is also the plane of composition, the plane of differences, and the plane of consistency (MP 330). This is the coexistence and mutual construction of speed, intensity, and affect for individuals with multiple differences. Contemporaneously, this plane is the plane of multiplication, the plane of population, and the plane of contagion. This plane does not evolve, but rather creeps up. At the same time, it continuously splinters apart and returns, however, this return does not denote the identity, but the difference (MP 376). The plane is, as such, the repetitive movement of opening and returning.

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<sup>5</sup> Strata serve as an important concept in Deleuze's philosophy, a concept mainly discussed in Chapter 3 of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze uses this concept to challenge traditional metaphysics, and disagrees with any *a priori* substrate and the nature of a thing. He highlights the different modes that are intertwined by things. First, Deleuze contends that the system of the strata does not bear any relation with signifier and signified, base and superstructure, or mind and matter. With this concept in mind, all sorts of strata are then reduced to a single stratum, cutting and closing the relations between stratum and stratum (ATP 71-72; MP 92). Thus, Deleuze and Guattari write that:

[E]ach stratum serves as the substratum for another stratum. Each stratum has a unity of composition defined by its milieu, substantial elements, and formal traits (Ecumenon). But it divides into *parastrata* according to its irreducible forms and associated milieus, and into *epistrata* according to its layers of formed substances and intermediary milieus. *Epistrata* and *parastrata* must themselves be thought of as strata (ATP 73; MP 93, emphasis original).

Secondly, Deleuze and Guattari indicate that forces, physical chemistry, geology, and human beings are a kind of expression. There exists an interrelation, inter-presupposition, and inter-penetration among these seemingly dissimilar things. There is synchrony and resonance among them (this explains why he disagrees with the distinction between infrastructure and suprastructure), they are just revealed in different forms, or expressed in different modes (the triad/three principal modes of organization). If we pay more detailed attention to Deleuze's philosophy, we can see the strata everywhere, for example: mineral-organic-human; concretion-vital milieu-spirit; form-content-expression; material-elementary-composed; territory-deterritorialization-territorialization; difference-flight-nomad.



Deleuze emphasizes that the plane of immanence is not a concept, nor is it the concept of any concept. If this were the case, we would lose the singularity of the plane of immanence, in addition to the plane itself losing its openness (*QPH* 38). Furthermore, Deleuze believes there is no such thing as a pure concept. Every concept must be comprised of various parts. Moreover, these parts that comprise a concept must be defined. Consequently, all concepts are diverse and no unitarily constructed concepts exist. Even if a certain philosophy starts with one initial concept, this concept has many elements. For this reason, all concepts are an unregulated contour defined by some of its number.

Thus, a concept is the work of articulation, cutting (*découpage*), and cross-checking (*recouplement*). It is an assemblage of diversity, but is a fragmented whole (*QPH* 21). Deleuze employs the diversity of ideas to distinguish concepts. According to him, a concept (*Différence et répétition* 281-82)<sup>6</sup> is only the scope of intelligence and provides a partial answer, while the idea is diversity. The idea, as such, is the whole and also a dual whole. It passes through the virtual and actualizes the duality to create differences. Within these differences there is sustained continuity and heterogeneity, and from this come *nth* dimensions (*DR* 236). As such, Deleuze believes there are three attributes of multiplicity: continuity, heterogeneity, and simplicity (*Bergsonism* 42; *Bergsonisme* 36).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if the study of ecology is considered an idea, the reconceptualization of it must be duration, heterogeneity, and simplicity to interpret the dualistic relationship in which different existents continuously divide and actualize.

### The Impersonal: Anti-anthropocentrism

As stated in the preceding section, ecology is the plane of difference for the coexistence of differentiated beings. It is worth noting that the natural plane does not seek to distinguish between natural and human, but to think about how people enter a diverse relationship with other beings. Deleuze's description of the human situation demonstrates his belief that human beings themselves can only be constituted by a limited fold. So a person can only live through the plane of dissemination of living tissues, the diffusion of language, and the

<sup>6</sup> *Différence et répétition* will henceforth be abbreviated as *DR*.

<sup>7</sup> The English version of *Bergsonism* will be henceforth abbreviated as *Be*, and the French one will be as *Bf*.

disparity of production patterns (*Foucault* 138).<sup>8</sup> That is to say, in order to survive, humans must constitute a new form by allying and combining with extra-territorial relations. Thus he quotes Nietzsche who remarked: “[M]an imprisoned life, but the superman is what frees life within man himself, to the benefit of another form, and so on” (*Fe* 130; *Ff* 139). For Deleuze, only when people go beyond their limited physical form, or beyond the “Human” form regulated by ontology, can human beings, with a variety of strength, intensity and emotion, continue to constitute and create their own life.

Furthermore, Deleuze believes that a person is a totality, which is more than simply a physical body, and this sense of totality is a power/potential (*puissance*),<sup>9</sup> which transcends our physicality. Therefore, with a body without organs, humans can transcend beyond the senses dictated by the organs. This is a feeling of uncertainty, which is no longer the representation of the senses. It is always already multi-layered and excessive, going beyond that which captures the organisms of our lives, making life livable and full of the strength of various forces. In other words, a different intensity constitutes multiplicity, as well as its threshold or territory. A multiplicity, depending on its threshold, continues to transform itself into a series of other multiplicities. People therefore do not exist as a body or as organs. Instead, they, with a non-organic approach, constantly keep themselves formless. When people have not yet discovered that they are bodies without organs, it means that they have not yet deconstructed themselves, and that they haven’t known themselves. Thus, for Deleuze, the discovery of having a body without organs in practice is a goal people can never reach, but must continue to approach. Thus he asserts, “Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it. It’s a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It is where everything is played out” (*ATP* 151; *MP* 187).

Thus the plane of difference, constituted by speed, strength and other complex relationships, keeps people in an everlasting status of individuation, i.e., existing only between various elements while maintaining vitality and creativity (*MP* 316). The power of self-preservation does not come from the destruction of nature, but from the power of enabling us to be more capable of maintaining

<sup>8</sup> In order not to confuse the same title of Deleuze’s French and English versions, I will henceforth abbreviate the English translation as *Fe*, and the French version as *Ff*.

<sup>9</sup> In Deleuze’s context, *puissance* can be conceptualized as a potential force. Though invisible and in-actual, *puissance* has a simultaneous double force: it can actualize something in a certain manner, but at the same time, it makes the thing unactualized in a fixed form. Thus, it has the double power of both enabling and un-enabling it. Hence, it is the cause that renders the visible actualized, and also the cause that renders the visible incapable of being actualized in a certain fixed form. Its opening to the thing is possibility and difference, making it always embryonic (*larvaire*) and always beyond itself.

relationships with other species, which increases our dynamic loading in order to fulfill our own self-preservation. Only creation can be more than life (*plus que la vie*). Deleuze believes that extension is not only a past experience but also an expansive experience and a transcendent experience. It is a continuum—heterogeneous, continuous, and immanent. Hence, he claims, “[T]he aspect of duration [is the means] by which the thing differs in kind from all others *and from itself* (alteration)” (*Be* 31; *Bf* 32, emphasis in original). That is, duration is both the continuation of the individual and the reaction of the individual to the whole. Through the continuous returning (*ramener*) of relationships with the whole, the individual accumulates and recreates relationships, in addition to continuing the process of creation. Creation is difference. In differences we clearly see the intensity (*intensité*) of individuals, and this forms the limitless becoming of multiplicity. Therefore, differences extend the survival of the self.

Accordingly, among the natural planes of difference, man can only be an individual without subject. Due to their composed diverse syntheses, people can become open and possible individuation (*individuation possible*). Furthermore, they are not preexisting unity (*unité préexistante*), but rather, multiplicity being generated. In this regard, according to Deleuze, multiplicity is always a notion of the dynamic and impersonal. This implies that ecology is cyclical with intervals. Duration continues between these cycles, as do the processes comprised by their relationship, their becoming and genesis, and concerning life. The proximity between lives constructs intermingling and complicated relationships, which makes it impossible to distinguish which is subject and which is object. Rather, everything simply becomes a milieu, a stratum.

In this milieu mutually formed by differences, existents have a life comprised by differences and connections. These differences do not exist between the instant and the eternal, nor can they be found between the regular and the irregular, but rather between the two modes. Ecology is neither linear nor striated, but rather a smooth space. It is an assemblage within space. Ecology in this trajectory is an interval activity with multiplicity as its unique characteristic, and this activity comprises a milieu in which unfixed dynamic forces are found. Such dynamic forces make becoming open and, in so doing, it is able to surpass a multitude of categories. In this respect, becoming cannot be found within any category, but rather all of these differences, flows, and changes must occur within the interval milieu of multiplicity. Multiplicity casts off the general category (*catégories générales*) of unity, as stated by Deleuze: “Multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organisation belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system” (*DR* 236).

According to Deleuze, there are two types of multiplicity, the first of which is quantitative multiplicity (*la multiplicité quantitative*), and the second of which is qualitative multiplicity (*la multiplicité qualitative*). Quantitative multiplicity is static and exterior. Through intelligence it becomes a specific unity. On the other hand, qualitative multiplicity is virtual, external, heterogeneous, potential, and cannot return to the form of quantitative multiplicity (*Bf* 30-31). Quantitative multiplicity can expel our kinetic energy, while qualitative multiplicity is a kinetic energy generated through movement. According to Deleuze, the differentiation in multiplicity lies not in the dichotomy between spirit and matter, but rather in the sensory-motor (*sensori-motrice*) differences, or in the affect differences. This is connected with the kinetic energy of our existence and creation (*CC* 32).

The difference between quantitative and qualitative multiplicity is based on the duality of our bodies, while the affect in us is at its core. Our bodies are a shifting border or threshold, with creatures being generated where multiplicities border on one another. As a body without organs, every multiplicity is a moving border. The body continues to follow this border shuttling through past and future. Briefly stated, the key to multiplicity is not numbers, but rather the degree of intrinsic intensity (*degrés intrinsèques intenses*) (*DR* 59). Deleuze argues, "A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions" (*ATP* 249; *MP* 305). The multiplicity of quality is intensity, which creates gaps, and these gaps render the possibility of philosophy. Deleuze believes shifts ceaselessly occur within multiplicities, and they are continuously immersed in one another. Every division alters its state, so qualitative multiplicity is potential, infinity, continuation, heterogeneousness, and singularity; it is diffusion, is extremely vital. In fact, a qualitative multiplicity is the axis of movement, and in its every affect there are, contemporaneously, the conditions for the freeing of creative consciousness, as well as the specification of reasoning matter.

From here it is possible to see that Deleuze's understanding of life is not limited to mankind's understanding, while the formal and intelligent man is limited. Deleuze wants to "have a hazy existence halfway between concept and preconceptual plane" (*WP* 61; *QPH* 60). By striving towards this existence, he becomes a member of the "conceptual personae" (*les personages conceptuels*), people who are superior and distinguished from the rest of mankind (*anthropologie ethnologique*). Because conceptual personae are a distinct convergence of moments and strengths of behavior, Deleuze points out that conceptual personae are not related to their anthropomorphic counterparts. Instead, they lie within the ambiguousness of planes. Conceptual personae are a concept, as well as the powers of affect and perception. In this way, although ambiguous,

they can appear in different forms within the plane (QPH 64). By contrast, the physical body (*corps physique*), or a man as subjectivity (*subjectivité*), is situated on the level of being (*être*). Conceptual personae are unconnected with the subject because they are impersonal and they are not objects. This is because the heterogeneous world is an original, pre-individual state. Thus, as Deleuze contends, individuality is not necessarily incarnated in a body or a personal subjectivity of "individuation," but the genesis of the individual or ontogenesis.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, understanding the problem of life does not begin with a specific person, but from the conceptual personae and from the pre-individual, which is also Deleuze's concept of the body without organs. To this end, Deleuze emphasizes that as we seek to understand life, "philosophy constantly brings conceptual personae to life; it gives life to them" (WP 62; QPH 61). The creation of these conceptual personae simultaneously creates bodies without organs. The body without organs is in conflict with the physical body because, being physical, it has organs and boundaries, it requires satisfaction, and thus is limited. After these limits splinter, life can finally be directly discovered as a body without organs (MP 196). This body without organs is not bound by the physical body; instead, it possesses intensity flow (*les flux d'intensité*) concerning desires, feelings, life, and death. These different intensities are an uninterrupted continuum that fuses with differences to construct a plane of consistency in which life is constituted. It is a plane with a living body (*corps vivant*) and intensive body (*corps intensif*). That is to say, the body without organs is not in a specific location, nor does it occupy space. Rather it is the tension and flow in the performance (extension) of space. As such, it is not a fixed territory. After every flux it connects, spreads out, extends, and is reconstituted. It is a series of actual assemblages (MP 186).

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to elaborate the notions such as "concept" and "conceptual persona." For Deleuze, concept is a status of concrete expression. Conversely, the conceptual persona is a movement or force of an engaged concept. Thus, he contends that "concepts are not deduced from the plane. The conceptual persona is needed to create concepts on the plane" (QPH 73; WIP 75). The conceptual persona can be regarded as a potential (*puissance*), a potential always territorializing and deterritorializing. Deleuze explicitly notes that "the conceptual persona and the plane of immanence presuppose each other" (WIP 75; QPH 73). The concepts are in the plane of immanence, and the bifurcations, creations, separations, and combinations of the numerous concepts reveal the conceptual persona's engagement in the plane of immanence. One thing worth noting is that the conceptual persona does not indicate the personalized persona, but is pre-formal as the ambiguous and potential power. It is a concept of "being-potential" (*être-en-puissance*). As a being-potential, the conceptual persona enables us to think not merely about the person reduced or simplified by Reason. Instead, it is a thinking toward life, i.e., the creation of changes within the relationships of intensities. Therefore, the conceptual persona is an anthropocentric thinking, and this paradoxically and truly touches the core of life. However, limited by the structure of the paper, allow my discussion to stop here.

The body without organs acts as a plane of convergence for intensities, a territory of pre-individualization, in which all corporal events (memory, pain, desire, happiness, life, death, etc.) occur. It is the solution domain of connections, changes, and fluxes of each event, and this infuses life with great vitality. The becoming, forming, and impersonal pre-individual can be conceptualized as the embryonic body (*sujet larvaire*), which resembles an egg (*l'oeuf*). It is distinct from the aforementioned physical body; it remains in a constant state of flux and creation. It is the territory of difference intensity and it is not an already constituted subject (*MP* 200-02). Thus, the body without organs replaces the physical body, as well as the subject world and general history. Here Deleuze gets rid of the notion of anthropocentrism. Except for becoming, the world contains no matter outside of itself, and all that exist are becoming-animals within changes of intensity. For this reason, anthropocentrism in the Western tradition and subjectivism have been considered an obstruction to becoming. Deleuze further rejects the notion of man as the base of existence. He believes various existents all have diverse values and significance and accordingly affirm the concept of dynamic becoming. Through the body without organs and the conceptual personae, Deleuze provides a domain solution for the perception of man as subject and attempts to provide Life a place where it can exist in tranquility (*QPH* 67).

Deleuze also contends that life is distinct from existence. Life is like a fold; it is a transcendental territory in which singularities connect. Every fold of life connects it with substance. It becomes flesh and is formed with matter as its foundation (*Be* 107). In this way, life is the milieu in which man and different existents commonly create an All (*Tout*). Additionally, it readily generates new relationships with the material environment and is extremely vital. It refuses the given (*donné*) nature. As such, life transcends the limits of existence. Deleuze claims:

Each living being's individuality [is] not as a form, or a development of form, but as a complex relation between differential velocities, between deceleration and acceleration of particles. [It is a] composition of speeds and slowness on a plane of immanence (*SPPh* 123; *SPbP* 165).

Therefore, life is not a nostalgic Being, nor is it an oblivious Being. Conversely, it is a vital and lively dynamism, made up of the individual's expansion and development that transcends existence.<sup>11</sup> Every individual is an unlimited diversity, and all of nature is a diversity formed by a completely individualized diversity.

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<sup>11</sup> Please see Vaysse 173.

## Beyond Life: Ethology of Difference, Becoming and Duration

In summary, this paper has endeavored to elucidate the idea of ethology by first illuminating Deleuze's two concepts of plane of immanence and body without organs, followed by an exploration of the complex relationships between humans and the environment. In so doing, this paper has argued that a new kind of ethics and ontology regarding the coexistence of differences can be established.

First and foremost, based on the concepts of coexistent plane and strata, ethology is very different from the current mainstream environmental movement, because the latter still approaches environmental issues from an economic perspective.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, so-called ethology seeks not to isolate the environment as the object of its study, but rather to see it as an interlocked stratum consisting of culture, society, economy, politics, nature and other essential entities, that gather together and construct a living environment for human beings. The relationship between people and the environment is diverse, complex, and overlapping. This sort of relationship between the two cannot be analyzed from one isolated aspect. In other words, ecology does not begin with a single individual, nor does it stem from the human perspective; by rejecting these as necessary starting points, ecology can finally become an epistemological subject.

Furthermore, ethology discusses how humans are able to discard these anthropocentric concepts in order to find a better way of leading a balanced and coexistent life with the environment. The relation between people and the environment is a dynamic process rather than a static norm. Ecology is not simply an object to be observed or constructed. Rather, humanity is a part of the ecological process itself, so it is concerned with how humans manifest themselves and carry out their activities within it. Thus, ecology does not suggest man in nature, but man's living (*habite*) and affectivity in it. So, man's relationship with ecology is not a clear-cut relation, but rather a unified interlocked relation, an intertwining whole in which distinctions cannot be made. Nature is not prior to man, nor is it created through activity. Man cannot determine what ecology and nature are, but can only make an appearance within them in a mutual

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<sup>12</sup> See *Ecologie et politique*, in which André Gorz and Michel Bosquet contend that capitalists are eager to do environmental jobs, yet always with money in mind (6). Gorz and Bosquet also compare the logic behind environmental ethics (*l'éthique environnementale*) and economical reasoning (*raisonnements économiques*). What is considered "growth" in economical reasoning is a "catastrophe" in environmental ethics; what is considered "revenue" in economical reasoning is a "loss" in environmental ethics. In a similar manner, what is regarded as "multiple" in economical reasoning is a "waste" in environmental ethics (32-33).

relationship with other existents. This appearance is ambiguous and, as yet, unformed, and is still in the process of becoming. In this light, ecology is both ethical and ontological: humans are beginning to understand themselves again, and in so doing they are able to understand their place in the environment, as well as the intensity and affectivity between themselves and other beings.

Thus, ecology is a plane of immanence continuously refolding itself and enfolding itself, and not a specific life. It transcends subject and object and does not rely on one existence, nor does it yield to one activity. It ceaselessly appears as impersonal life. This immanence is not a unity, which surpasses the other, nor is it a subject that settles all things. This is not to say that immanence exists in life, but rather that immanence is life itself. This life is immanence; it is ultimate immanence and power. As such, the plane of immanence is necessarily potential, and this potential is not fictitious. It suggests the existence of two types of motion, one realized and one unrealized (*symbiose/hyperbolique*). These two types of energy allow existents to maintain differences and continue to be open and extended. For this reason, Deleuze's philosophy of differences is a powerful one: difference is creation; it is differentiation in the realization of potential.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, difference transcends individual things and ceaselessly extends itself (*Bf*36). Deleuze states:

Each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities. The plane of consistency of Nature is like an immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations. There is therefore a unity to the plane of nature, which applies equally to the inanimate and the animate, the artificial and the natural. (*ATP* 254; *MP* 311)

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<sup>13</sup> I contend that the notions such as virtual, potential, possible, and creative are highly related in Deleuze's thought. In other words, the virtual have constantly been regarded as the potential, yet the other side of the potential is not the actual, but the possible. The possible endows the virtual with creative power (*Bf*100). His notion of "world" consists in virtuality, a place to be actualized, and the world is the possible to be actualized in terms of the material and form (*Le Pli* 140). Thus, the virtual can be conceptualized as the power of the virtual. For further information, please refer to Footnote 4 which pertains to the discussion of "*puissance*." I hold that the presiding differences on the notion of the potential between Deleuze and Aristotle rely at least on the two points: first, the virtual (Deleuze) cannot be gauged within the axis of the visible realization. In other words, the potential as a virtual power does not and cannot be actualized in a certain form; it cannot be realized in a certain mode. The relationship between the potential (or the virtual) in Deleuze and the actual does not depend on heredity or series. This is different from Aristotle's potential, which confines the potential and the actual within an *a priori* and preexisting relation. Second, the opposite of Deleuze's potential is not the realization, as his system of thought consists in becoming, in which the strata cannot be distinguished. However, Aristotle's notion of the potential suggests that things have their tendency to their opposite, such as the tendencies from good to evil, from low to high, from immaturity to maturity, from lack to whole, and from partial to all.



Here, Deleuze avoids concepts constructed by human reason, and he has situated man within a different theoretical extension. Man can only be one part of ecology, and is one that approaches the realization of potential, a generating animal, and a body without organs which co-exists with other existents on the plane of difference. Nature, the world, and ecology cannot be understood through heritage or familiar relations, but rather can only be understood from the concept of becoming: a heterogeneity (*MP* 396).

Secondly, ecology must be approached from the perspective of a body without organs, rather than from the modern view of nature as an object. Since the Enlightenment, nature has been considered simply a part of human reason, a mere tool in determining how the world works. By limiting nature in this way, it becomes a uniformity, which causes humanity to depart from, and be placed in direct opposition with, nature. Mankind forgets itself as well as nature. Man recreates himself and nature through reason and by making nature an instrument, so the world is distant and unfamiliar from itself. Thus, with this rationale in mind, mankind is led to the inaccurate conclusion that man and nature are dualistic. It is precisely this presupposition about humankind's separateness from nature that necessitates humanity returning to nature. However, returning to this nature simply constitutes returning to another artificial and fictitious nature created by mankind. Furthermore, the return to nature suggests yet another cycle of man-made "nature," so that this return does not serve as an important breakthrough in restoring man in nature.

In contrast, if man's activities are part of nature, then how man acts and what man creates and generates is already in nature. Thus, mankind's activities are the infinite extensibility of nature (*extensibilire infinie*) and are a part of it. Deleuze believes natural things are the affect of the immanent plane's assignment. These things and manmade things therefore ultimately cannot be distinguished. Also, with respect to the body without organs, which Deleuze emphasizes, man is an affective creature and life is not determined by organs. As such, we need to reject somatics, or those sensations we obtain through our extremities in knowing the world. We need to return to the most natural affective state, an immanent experience which is not organized or contrived and which starts directly with affect instead of pre-composed feelings. Deleuze asserts the study of ecology is the study of affect, with emotions as individual latitude. Thus, they can form relationships with other distinct individuals and enter becoming with them (*MP* 315). Affect is a potential situated in the center. It does not fall into the trap of being a subject or a homogenous unity. Instead, it signifies *élan vital*.

In conclusion, both becoming-animals and the body without organs sub-

vert the concepts of ecology, and this creativity, the consideration of derealization, is the primary focus of Deleuze's writings. Deleuze asks: "After all, is not Spinoza's *Ethics* the great book of the BwO?" (ATP 153; MP 190). Deleuze emphasizes that it is imperative for a person to have a direction toward which s/he can strive in his/her life. This is precisely what makes a self a body without organs. This is an exploration for the immanent and an experience of the external world that renders the body and the world contemporaneously a transcendent plane. He indicates that the actualized world has too many pre-existing frameworks; it is a striated world. However, the world itself is without rules. This lack of rules does not indicate the world moves toward emptiness and chaos. Rather, it makes the world move toward limits, it ensures that these limits will not be realized, and that the world will move toward limitless specificity. Only the plane of immanence, which is full of differences and singularity, is the world in its true form. For this reason, Deleuze believes the body without organs is a flux-creature. Its ultimate significance is the potential of realization. It ensures continuous becoming, actualization of the self, and the possibilities of the world. Life, ecology, the world, and nature, each continues its activities and extensions within this plane of differences that they all inhabit and share.

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## 德勒茲的生態倫理學： 內在平面與無人稱

### 摘要

本文將從德勒茲無器官身體出發，說明生態概念並非僅是對於其他物種的保護，亦非保育技術，而是一門與生命延續切身相關的倫理學。無器官身體顛覆了生態學概念，而這種創生性、去現實性的思考，便是德勒茲筆下的哲學工作，也因此德勒茲說：「無器官身體這本偉大著作難道不正是倫理學嗎？」。德勒茲強調人一生必須努力的方向，便是讓自己成為無器官身體，一種對生命的內在探索及對外在世界的體驗，讓自身與世界同時作為既內在且超越的平面。他指出現下世界有太多既有的框架，是種紋理的世界，然世界自身是無原則的世界，無原則並不是指世界走向虛無混亂，而是讓世界走出限制它的東西，使這些限制不能發揮其作用，讓世界朝向無窮的特異性。一個佈滿差異和特異性的內在平面，才是世界自身，因此他認為無器官身體作為一種流變一動物，其最徹底的意義便是一種正在實現的潛在，其確保不斷地生成、現實化自身與世界的可能性。

**關鍵字：**無器官身體，內在平面，無人稱，生態學倫理，生成