

What Animals Teach Us about Politics

What animals teach us about politics. . . . Not, on first impression, the most promising of propositions. What *would* animals have to teach us? Besides, that is, resignation to the hard necessities of indifferent nature, the desperate struggle for survival, wild war of all against all, where the closest thing to victory is the provisional peace of a workable adaptation providing a fragile island of normality in the stormy seas of a life “nasty, brutish, and short,” as Hobbes famously put it at the dawn of the modern age of the human.

However, for us who, retrospectively, have never been modern, the state of nature is not what it was. The law of competition has had to bow before a healthy dose of cooperation, whose crucial contributions to evolution are now widely acknowledged, with symbiosis accepted as the very origin of multicellular life (Margulis 1999; Nowak 2011). It is no longer out of the question, in view of these developments, to place sympathy on equal footing with aggression as a factor in nature. At the same time, the rigid image of the animal as a mechanism dominated by the automatism of instinct is showing signs of slackening, to give greater margin to individual variations, as evidenced in the rise of a new research area in ethology dedicated to animal “personality” (Carere and Maestriperi 2013). As we will see, instinct itself shows signs of elasticity, even a creativity one might be forgiven for labeling artistic.

“Sympathy,” “creativity”: for many, whenever these words occur in too close proximity to “animal,” alarm bells ring. The accusation of anthropomorphism rings next. When the task is undertaken to integrate into the concept of nature notions such as these, so long marginalized by the dominant currents in evolutionary biology, animal behavior, and philosophy, there is little hope of dodging that accusation. The problem is the qualitative character of the terms. “Qualitative” suggests “subjective.” Just

to utter these words gives what David Chalmers called “the hard problem” of consciousness a foot in the door, an uninvited guest lurking at the threshold of the halls of science (Chalmers 1995). The question becomes one not only of animal behavior but of animal thought, and its distance from or proximity to those capacities over which we human animals assert a monopoly, and on which we hang our inordinate pride in our species being: language and reflexive consciousness.

In what follows, I willingly risk the accusation of anthropomorphism,¹ in the interests of following the trail of the qualitative and the subjective in animal life, and of creativity in nature, outside the halls of science, in the meanders of philosophy, with the goal of envisioning a different politics, one that is not a human politics of the animal, but an integrally animal politics, freed from the traditional paradigms of the nasty state of nature and the accompanying presuppositions about instinct permeating so many facets of modern thought.

Recent investigations with a similar emphasis on creativity in nature have taken as their point of departure the artfulness of animal courtship rituals. This starting point focuses the discussion on sexual selection. For reasons that will become clear, this is not the path that will be taken here. Sexual selection, as analyzed by Elizabeth Grosz (2008), successfully calls into question the neo-Darwinian doctrine that chance mutation is the only source of life’s variation, loosening morphogenesis—the genesis of forms of life—from the vice grip of blind chance. It also calls into question the associated doctrine that the only principle of selection operative in evolution is adaptation to external circumstance (Grosz 2011, pt. 3, ch. 8).² In the arena of animal courtship, selection bears directly on qualities of lived experience. The aim is at creativity, rather than adaptive conformity to the constraints of given circumstance. Sexual selection expresses an inventive animal exuberance attaching to qualities of life, with no direct use-value or survival value. As Darwin himself pointed out (1871, 63–64), the excesses of sexual selection can only be described as an expression of a “sense of beauty” (just ask a peahen). The present account agrees on all these points. The basic reason it will not take sexual selection as its point of departure is that doing so leaves by the wayside the majority of life-forms populating the earth. It leapfrogs over more “primitive,” less

ostentatiously coupling creatures, not to mention “lower” animals that persist in multiplying asexually.³

The focus will instead be on animal play, working in particular from Gregory Bateson’s famous essay on the topic (Bateson 1972). Play, it is true, comes into its own as an independent arena of activity among “higher” animals of a certain level of complexity, in particular among mammals.⁴ But as we will see, understanding the flourishing of play at that level necessitates theorizing wellsprings of sympathy and creativity, the qualitative and even the subjective, everywhere on the continuum of animal life. The very nature of instinct—and thus of animality itself—must be rethought as a consequence.

This project requires replacing the human on the animal continuum. This must be done in a way that does not erase what is different about the human, but respects that difference while bringing it to new expression on the continuum: immanent to animality. Expressing the singular belonging of the human to the animal continuum has political implications, as do all questions of belonging. The ultimate stakes of this project are political: to investigate what lessons might be learned by playing animality in this way about our usual, all-too-human ways of working the political. The hope is that in the course of the investigation we might move beyond our anthropomorphism *as regards ourselves*: our image of ourselves as humanly standing apart from other animals; our inveterate vanity regarding our assumed species identity, based on the specious grounds of our sole proprietorship of language, thought, and creativity. We will see what the birds and the beasts have instinctively to say about this.

This essay is an extended thought experiment in what an animal politics can be. Its aim is to construct the concept of an animal politics and carry it to the limit of what it can do, with sympathy and creativity, starting in play and ending in play (in much the same way that Whitehead says that philosophy starts in wonder and, when all is said and done, the wonder remains; 1968, 168).

Bateson’s discussion of animal play revolves around *difference*. This is the best starting point for thinking the animal continuum, which is nothing other than a spectrum of continual variation—a changing field of reciprocally presupposing differencings, complexly imbricated with one

another all along the line. In the course of the following discussion, a concept will be slowly constructed for this reciprocal imbrication of differences: mutual inclusion. But for the moment, the question at hand is how difference comes into play.

Two animals who abandon themselves to play, for example, a play fight, perform acts that “are similar to but not the same as those of combat” (Bateson 1972, 179). Each ludic gesture envelops a difference in a display of similarity. This could be taken as a definition of analogy. Playing doesn’t involve producing a perfect resemblance between two acts belonging to different orders. It’s not about making “as if” one were the other, in the sense of making one pass for the other. The play gesture is analogous because what is in play is not the Same. The play gesture holds the analog activities apart by signaling a minimal difference, in exactly the same act in which it brings them together. It brings acts belonging to different arenas together in their difference. What is played upon is the noncoincidence. The ludic gesture envelops that disparity in its own execution. This is precisely what makes it play. If a gesture in a play fight were the same as its analogue in combat, the play would immediately turn into a fight. A ludic gesture must signal its belonging to the arena of play if it is to avoid falling out of it. If, for example, two wolf cubs in a play fight perform their moves with too much similarity to fighting, and not enough in analogy with it, the partners will become adversaries on the spot, with the attendant risk of potentially serious injury. A ludic gesture must signal, in its manner of execution: “this is a game.”

The play statement “this is a game,” Bateson explains, is far from a simple act of designation. It is the staging of a *paradox*. A wolf cub who bites its litter mate in play “says,” in the manner in which it bites, “this is not a bite.” The play bite, Bateson says, actively “stands for” another action (180), at the same time as it puts the context in which that action finds its practical force and normal function in *suspense*. The play bite that says it is not a bite has the *value* of the analogous action without its force or function. The wolf cub says through his teeth: “this is not a bite; this is not a fight; this is a game; I am hereby placing myself on a different register of existence, which nevertheless stands for its suspended analogue.”

The suspension exerts its own force: a force of induction. When I make the kind of gesture that places me in the register of play, you are immedi-

ately taken there as well. My gesture transports you with me into a different arena of activity than the one we were just in. You are inducted into play with me. In a single gesture, two individuals are swept up together and move in tandem to a register of existence where what matters is not longer what one does, but what one does stands-for.

The force of the ludic gesture is a force of passage which induces a qualitative change in the nature of the situation. Two individuals are transported at one and the same time, but without changing location, by an instantaneous force of transformation. They are taken up in a *transformation in place* that does not affect one without affecting the other. The ludic gesture releases a force of *transindividual* transformation. The immediacy of the transformation that the gesture's execution induces qualifies the ludic gesture as a performative act. Play is made of performative gestures exerting a transindividual force.

Bateson paraphrases the meaning ludic gestures perform in the following formula: "These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote" (180; emphasis in the original). There are two things worth noting in how this formula plays out.

First, Bateson is underlining the fact that the ludic gesture is a form of *abstraction*. In addition to being a performative effecting a transformation-in-place, the ludic gesture carries an element of metacommunication, which is to say, of reflexivity. It is commenting on what it's doing as it's doing it: "these actions in which we now engage . . ." This "commentary" comes in the form of a stylistic difference. In play, you don't bite, you nip. The difference between biting and nipping is what opens the analogical gap between combat and play. It is the *style* of the gesture that opens the minimal difference between the play gesture and its analogue in the arena of combat. The gesture performs a move, with all immediacy of an instantaneous transformation-in-place, while in the very same move it performs an abstraction on its action: reflecting upon it on the metalevel of commentary, and gapping it with an analogical distance of reciprocal difference.

Second, the difference that the gesture's abstraction puts into play is in a particular mode: that of the conditional. "These actions do not denote what those actions *for which they stand would* denote." The ludic gesture infuses the situation with conditional reality. The analog actions

of the played-upon arena of activity, that of combat, are made present in the mode of possibility. The currently occurring action finds itself inhabited by actions belonging to a different existential arena, whose actions are effectively felt to be present, but in potential, held in suspense. Even though held in suspense, they exercise a power. They orient the actions of the game's unfolding by analogy, providing them with a guiding logic. They give the game what Susanne Langer calls its "commanding form" or formative "matrix" (1953, 122–123). The gestures of combat in-form the game: modulate it from within. At the same time, they themselves are slightly deformed by the stylism of the play and its own ludic logic. It is under the effect of this deformation that the blows of combat transmute into moves in a game.

Where the immanent modulation and stylistic deformation overlap—that is to say, in the gesture itself—the arena of combat and that of play enter into a zone of indiscernibility, without their difference being erased. The logics of fighting and play embrace each other, in their difference. They overlap in their shared gesture, the simplicity of which as a single act constitutes their zone of indiscernibility. They overlap in the unicity of the performance, without the distinction between them being lost. They are performatively fused, without becoming confused. They come together without melding together, co-occurring without coalescing. The zone of indiscernibility is not a making indifferent. On the contrary, it is where differences come actively together.

The mode of abstraction produced in play does not respect the law of the excluded middle. Its logic is that of mutual inclusion. Two different logics are packed into the situation. Both remain present in their difference and cross-participate in their performative zone of indiscernibility. Combat and play come together—and their coming-together makes three. There is one, and the other—and the *included middle* of their mutual influence. The zone of indiscernibility that is the included middle does not observe the sanctity of the separation of categories, nor respect the rigid segregation of arenas of activity.⁵

Bateson discusses at length the paradoxical nature of the abstraction effected in play. He sees it as an instance of the Epimenides paradox made famous by Bertrand Russell, which consists in "a negative statement containing an implicit negative metastatement" (180). The gestural statement

“this is not a bite” contains the implicit metastatement “these actions do not denote what they would denote.” But at the same time, if it was so simple a case as the actions not denoting what they would denote, they would not have to deny their denoting. The play statement is one that says what it denies, and denies what it says. It is logically undecidable. Of course, a wolf cub doesn’t say anything, strictly speaking. It says in doing. It acts. Its “statement” and “metastatement” are an enacted paradox, one with the simplicity of a single gesture. In the unicity of the gesture, two logics are gathered together in one metacommunication, charging the situation with possibilities that surpass it. The ludic gesture embodies this complexity. Its abstraction is embodied thought. Animal play activates paradox. It mobilizes and dramatizes it. The dramatization takes what from the point of view of traditional logic would be nothing more than its own implosion and actually *does* it. This makes it an *effective paradox*. Animal metacommunication is efficacious. It does, and induces doing, flush with its performance, directly, in the immediacy of its gestures’ execution. In animal play, logical undecidability takes on an efficacy that is as direct as it is paradoxical.

Bateson draws a lesson from this: “it would be bad natural history to expect the mental processes and communicative habits of mammals to conform to the logician’s ideal. Indeed, if human thought and communication always conformed to the ideal, Russell would not—in fact, could not—have formulated the ideal” (180). Here Bateson is pointing to another mutual inclusion: that of the animal and the human. It is animality and humanity as a whole, and in their difference, that have paradoxically entered into a zone of indiscernibility.

The difference between the human and the animal in this connection is perhaps that humans experience paradoxes of mutual inclusion as a breakdown of their capacity to think, and are agitated by it (Russell certainly was, and never quite got over it). The animal, however, is less agitated than it is activated by them. The animal in play actively, effectively affirms paradox. This augments its capacities in at least two ways. On the one hand, animals learn through play (to the extent that a play fight is preparation for the real combat engagements that may be necessary in the future). On the other hand, the purview of its mental powers expands. In play, the animal elevates itself to the metacommunicational level, where it

gains the capacity to mobilize the possible. Its powers of abstraction rise a notch. Its powers of thought are augmented. Its life capacities more fully deploy, if abstractly. Its forces of vitality are intensified accordingly. The ludic gesture is a *vital gesture*.

Humans may also practice effective paradox, when they permit themselves to abandon themselves to play. In play, the human enters a zone of indiscernibility with the animal. When we humans say “this is play,” we are assuming our animality. Play dramatizes the reciprocal participation of the human and the animal, from both sides. For when animals play, they are preparatorily enacting human capacities. Bateson says that in our usual assumptions we get the evolutionary order wrong, thinking that metacommunication must come after the denotative communication it complicates. In fact, “denotative communication as it occurs at the human level is only possible *after* the evolution of a complex set of metalinguistic (but not verbalized) rules which govern how words and sentences shall be related to objects and events. It is therefore appropriate to look for the evolution of such metalinguistic and/or metacommunicative rules at a prehuman and preverbal level” (180).

Animal play creates the conditions for language. Its metacommunicative action builds the evolutionary foundation for the metalinguistic functions that will be the hallmark of human language, and which distinguish it from a simple code. The prehuman, preverbal embodied logic of animal play is already essentially language-like. It is effectively, enactively linguistic *avant la lettre*, as humans say in French. Why then shouldn't the opposite also be the case: that human language is essentially animal, from the point of view of the ludic capacities it carries, so intimately bound up with its metalinguistic powers? Think of humor. Why not consider human language a reprise of animal play, raised to a higher power? Or say that it is actually in language that the human reaches its highest degree of animality? Didn't Deleuze and Guattari insist that it is in writing that the human “becomes-animal” most intensely, that is, enters most intensely into a zone of indiscernibility with its own animality (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 12–15, 34–38; 1987, 237–248, 256–260; see also Supplement 1 below)?

In play, it is precisely a question of intensification. The envelopment in a nonfighting field of what is proper to the arena of combat packs the situation. Each act carries a double charge of reality, as what is being done is

infused with what would be doing. The situation's actuality swells with possibility. Communication complicates itself with metacommunication. Each ludic gesture is loaded with these differences of level, situation, and mode of active existence. This intensification is brought about by the suspension of traditional logic as governed by the principle of the excluded middle. But it makes play much more than the simple breakdown of that logic. It effects a passage to a pragmatics where a different logic is directly embodied in action, flush with gesture. This other logic is nothing if not performed, nothing if not lived out. The form of abstraction staged in play is a *lived abstraction* (Massumi 2011a, 15–19, 42–43, 146–158, and *passim*).

What does this enactive pragmatics of lived abstraction consist in?

It all hinges on the minimal difference between the ludic gesture and the analogous gesture that it invokes, and in turn inhabits it. It is all in the gap between the bite and the nip, moving and gamboling, executing an action and dramatizing it. What pries open the minimal difference, enabling the mutual inclusion characterizing the logic of play, is once again style. The difference between a fight bite and a play bite is not just the intensity of the act in the quantitative sense: how hard the teeth clamp down. The difference is qualitative. The ludic gesture is performed with a mischievous air, with an impish exaggeration or misdirection, or on the more nuanced end of the spectrum, a flourish, or even a certain understated grace modestly calling attention to the spirit in which the gesture is proffered.⁶ A ludic gesture in a play fight is not content to be the same as its analogue in combat. It is not so much “like” a combat move as it is *combatesque*: like in combat, but with a little something different, a little something more. With a surplus: an excess of energy or spirit.

This excess is felt as a palpable enthusiasm carrying a force of induction, a contagious involvement. Étienne Souriau remarks upon the “enthusiasm of the body” with which an animal abandons itself to the lived abstraction of play (1965, 35).⁷ The animal in play is intensely animated. Its vital gestures embody a heightened vivacity. They express what Daniel Stern would call a *vitality affect* (1985, 53–61). Enthusiasm of the body is the vitality affect of play, made palpable. The vitality affect of play, and the enthusiasm of the body it expresses, coincide with the *-esque* in “combatesque.”

There is an “-esqueness” to the ludic gesture that marks its qualitative difference from the analog gestures of the arena of activity that is being played upon. The gestures’ -esqueness is the performative signature of the mode of abstraction at play. It embodies the “standing for” in Bateson’s formula. In other words, it is the enactive sign of the action’s value. In itself, it is pure standing-for, pure expressive value—the very element of the ludic in expression, as a form of lived abstraction. The -esqueness of the act instantiates the play-value of the game.

What is excessive in the situation, its charging with intensity, channels through the play-value of the game. It is a value of excess, in excess: a surplus-value. It is a surplus-value of animation, vivacity—a *surplus-value of life*, irreducibly qualitative, actively flush with the living.

The surplus-value of life that is one with the -esqueness of the vital gestures of play corresponds to what Raymond Ruyer calls that activity’s *aesthetic yield* (1958, 142). The aesthetic yield is the qualitative excess of an act lived purely for its own sake, as a value in itself, over and against any function the act might also fulfill. The yield is a surplus of vivacity, paradoxically arrived at by force of abstraction. Ruyer’s proposition is even more radical: he says that *every* instinctive act produces an aesthetic yield. This places play on a continuum of instinct and, conversely, instinct on the artistic spectrum. It is then a question of emphasis whether you consider play a variety of instinct, or instinct a carrier of play. Both are correct: mutual differential inclusion, with artistry as the operator of the inclusion.

Play instinctively belongs to the aesthetic dimension. In order to take what is singular about play fully into account, it is necessary to resituate it on a continuum that stretches the full length of the current of life, on all of its levels, from the most basic instinct all the way up to the most elaborated capacities for ludic expression and lived abstraction—those of human language. Human language: pure standing-for, with unparalleled powers of paradox, capable of producing the purest, most intensely abstract, expressive values. Human language: whose conditions of evolutionary possibility are set in place by play, on the continuum of instinct. All along the continuum, all of life, from the mutest of its instinctual expressions to its most loquacious, carries an irreducibly aesthetic dimension. Life itself is inseparable from the aesthetic yield it continuously enjoys. Ruyer takes up

Whitehead's term *self-enjoyment* as a synonym for the surplus-value of lived abstraction (Ruyer 1952, 103).⁸

The aesthetic yield of play is the qualitative measure of its uselessness. The -esqueness of the combatsque corresponds to the stylistic difference between executing an act and dramatizing it, between fulfilling a function and staging its standing-for. A gesture plays a ludic function to the exact degree to which it does not fulfill its analog function, which the ludic gesture places in suspense in the interests of its own standing-for it. If the expressive value of the standing-for is not pronounced enough, if the difference corresponding to the act's -esqueness is too minimal, if the gap between the arena of play and its analog arena is opened too slight a crack, if in a word the aesthetic yield is negligible, then the play activity can too easily turn into its analogue. Too quickly, the bite denotes what it denotes, and no longer what it would denote. It's war. There may well be blood. The game's surplus-value of life flips over into a deficit, in a transformation-in-place as immediate as that which inaugurated the play. The aesthetic dimension of the gesture retracts into an act of designation ("this is a bite") and into instrumental action ("whether I meant to or not, I am now effectively doing what I'm doing, and no longer what I would do").

The standing-for of the play gesture makes play an *expressive* activity, essentially in excess over function. Play's quality of animation, the surplus-value of life it performs with enthusiasm of the body, overflows instrumentality. Its yield by nature exceeds the functional use-value of its analog acts. The play act opens a gap between its own situational force and the functionality of the analogs it plays upon, and loads the gap with the purely expressive value of standing-for. This is a precarious maneuver that may fly off the tracks at any moment.

One might object that play does indeed have a function. It was, in fact, already mentioned: playing plays a learning role. According to prevailing opinions, when an animal engages in play fighting it is training for real combat later on. By this account, the play is formally modeled on its analog arena of activity: to be useful for training, the form of the play fight moves must closely enough resemble those of combat. Play's instrumental service to future function dictates that its guiding principle be that its form conform. It doesn't truly carry an expressive force, dedicated as it is to adaptive function. It is fundamentally in the service of the war of all

against all. It must be understood in terms of simple survival value, not the aesthetic production of surplus-value of life.

It is undeniable that play has a role in learning, and that the learning serves adaptive ends. It is less clear that this means that the relation of play to its analog arenas is essentially one of conformal subordination.⁹ The stylistic excess of play, its -esqueness, corresponds not only to a little something extra that gives its gestures flourish, but to a *power of variation*. The form of the gesture is deformed, more or less subtly, under pressure from the enthusiasm of the body propelling it. In the deformation, the analog form takes new form. The gap between the ludic gesture and its analogue creates a margin of maneuver: it opens the door to *improvisation*. Play is the arena of activity dedicated to the improvisation of gestural forms, a veritable laboratory of forms of live action. What is played at is invention. The aesthetic yield of the play comes with an active mobilization of improvisational powers of variation. Surplus-value of life equals surplus-value of inventiveness.

If this were not the case, the fight would be lost. It is actually the power of variation learned in play, the improvisational prowess it hones, that gives an animal the upper hand in combat or, to cite another example, in flight from a predator. A gesture whose form is modeled as a function of a recognized instrumental end is one that is normalized in advance of its deployment. A normalized gesture is a predictable gesture. If learning were limited to modeling the form of an instinctive act in advance of its instrumental deployment, it would be dangerously maladaptive. It would model its pupils to death. Ruyer holds that the power to improvise is a necessary dimension of all instinct.

It is not play that is modeled on the form of combat—it is the form of combat that is modulated by play. Far from play being slavishly subordinated to the functions of its analog arenas of activity, it is these functions that depend, for their continued functionality, on the powers of variation native to play. Success in fighting a foe or evading a predator is increased by an animal's power to improvise on the spot. When this happens, vital function has *captured* the expressive value of the gestures and channeled it toward its own instrumental ends. It is in fact instrumental action that is parasitic upon play. Life profits from the surplus-value of life produced by play, converted into survival value. Capture: only an autonomous activity

can be captured. Play, and the expressivity to which it dedicates itself, constitutes an autonomous domain of life activity, one that is fundamentally insubordinate to the logic of adaptation, even if it may be usefully captured by it under certain circumstances. This inverts the relation between play and its analog arenas. Instead of play slavishly conforming to them, it is in fact variations on their forms that are invented by play, and then secondarily take on adaptive function.

Ruyer insists that autonomous powers of variation are present in every instinctive activity of any kind (1958, 17–18, 27–28). If the instinctive act were as it is reputed to be—a stereotyped sequence of premodeled actions executed by reflex in the manner of an automatism—then instinct would be incapable of responding to chance changes in the environment (1958, 147). Chance variations in the environment must be matched by variation. This requires a certain creative plasticity, an improvisational margin of maneuver. Every instinctive act, no matter how stereotyped it normally seems to be, carries a margin of maneuver. Every instinct carries within itself a power of variation, to some degree or another. Every instinctive act holds a power of variation that we are well within our rights to call ludic, in the widest sense of the word. Or aesthetic, given the nature of the yield produced. For play's margin of maneuver is "style": the -esqueness that performs possibility. All of this obliges us to recognize expression as a vital operation as primordial as instinct itself. There is no life without surplus-value of life. There is no instrumentality without expressivity. Adaptation never comes without inventiveness. Expressivity and inventiveness are the cutting edge of the genesis of forms of life. It is through their margin of maneuver that the operational parameters of modes of existence are enlarged.

Darwin himself said as much when he sang the praises of the improvisational prowess of his beloved earthworms, to whom he dedicated a lengthy treatise. The operation of instinct, he writes, cannot be equated to "a simple reflex action" as if the animal "were an automaton" (Darwin 1890, 24).¹⁰ The proof is that the same stimulus doesn't lead to the same effect, depending on chance variations in the situation. In other words, instinct is sensitive to the relations between the particular elements composing the lived situation. Its action varies with the singularity of that situation. All earthworms instinctively pluck the opening of their burrows, but

the way they ensure this invariable instinctive function varies, depending on the materials available, the form in which they come, and their placement and configuration. “If worms acted solely through instinct [in the sense of] an unvarying inherited impulse, they would all [plug their burrows] in the same manner” (1890, 64–65). On the contrary, “we see an individual profiting from its individual experience” (95) to improvise a solution that is adapted, not to the generality of the situation, but to its singularity. This capacity, Darwin remarks, shows evidence of “mental power” (25, 34–35): a power of abstraction.

There is no reason not to consider this power of abstraction a kind of reflexivity. The general situation (plug the burrow) is reflected in the lived singularity (plug this burrow thus, here and now). This is a lived reflexivity, one with the inventive gestures that express it. Ruyer, as well as Bergson, extends this brain-free mental power all the way down to the amoeba, and even to the individual cells composing multicellular animal bodies (Ruyer 1958, 103–106).¹¹ “It would be as absurd,” writes Bergson, “to refuse consciousness to an animal because it has no brain as to declare it incapable of nourishing itself because it has no stomach” (Bergson 1998, 110).¹² Thus even at an evolutionary stage prior to play laying claim to its own independent arenas of activity and signing that difference as its own in-*-esqueness*, there was already an element of play in all instinctive acts. All acts of instinct are capable of affirming an expressive force of variation, as a power of singularization generating surplus-values of life. Every act, even the most instrumental, is fringed by a margin of improvisational expressiveness. Instinct is not limited to the automatic repetition of a reflex arc triggered by an inherited memory trace. This is one aspect of instinct. But it must not be forgotten that each “stereotyped” repetition of an instinctive act may potentially arc in the improvised future direction of the genesis of forms of life, of the expression of new variations on life’s constitutive modes of activity.

Ruyer, Bergson, and Bateson consider this power of expressive mentality to be the leading edge of evolution.¹³ It is the very engine of evolution, responsible for inventing the forms that come to be selected as adaptive. Bergson argues that this inventive force for variation is in operation even where forces of chance mutation are at work. A mutation in one element requires the surrounding elements to reconfigure themselves around it.

The remaining elements improvise themselves into a new integration around the change, in a way that cannot be laid to blind chance or explained by purely mechanistic principles, which operate locally, part to part. But an integration is just that—integral. That is, it concerns the coordination and correlation of all parts at once, in their manner of coming together (Bergson 1998, 65–76).¹⁴

The improvisational expressivity of instinct that gives it the integral power to generate surplus-value of life must be recognized as an aboriginal, autonomous mode of activity, irreducible to the functional modes that capture it. The difference, however minimal it may be, between functionality and expressivity, between instrumentality and aesthetic activity, is always and everywhere in force. Activity in its expressive dimension is by nature in excess over the normalized functions of the general forms of activity already adapted to survival. Instinct, in its aspect of expressive activity, has an inborn tendency to surpass the normal, by dint of enthusiasm of the body. It is animated by an immanent impetus toward the *supernormal*.

Niko Tinbergen's pioneering studies of instinct, which helped lay the foundations of the discipline of ethology, were not unscathed by this. Early on, Tinbergen noted a pronounced tendency of instinctive activity to favor what he called "supernormal stimuli" (1951, 44–47). Taking as his starting point the standard model of instinct as stimulus-response operating strictly by reflex, Tinbergen decided to inquire into which particular properties of given instinctual stimuli were functioning as the triggers. For example, in the herring gull a red spot on the female's bill serves under normal conditions as the trigger for feeding (Tinbergen and Perdeck, 1950). The spot attracts the peck of the chick, which stimulates the adult to regurgitate the menu. In order to study exactly which perceptual quality constituted the trigger, Tinbergen set about constructing a series of decoy bills presenting a range of variable characteristics. His goal was to isolate the precise properties essential to the instinctive behavior. In order to understand the behavior's parameters, he extended the range of variation presented well "beyond the limits of the normal object" (Tinbergen 1965, 68). To his great surprise, he was unable to isolate any particular properties he could point to as essential. Even a gray spot, in certain configurations, could do the trick. Even more surprisingly, Tinbergen found

to his consternation that among the decoys producing the most enthusiastic response on the part of the chick were those that *least* resembled the normal form of the female herring gull's bill. The young gull's enthusiasm of the body pressed ardently beyond the normal.

Tinbergen concluded that the instinctive sequence of actions did not in fact depend on any isolatable property, belonging either to the form of the presumed stimulus or to the ground against which it stood out. "There is no absolute distinction between effective sign-stimuli and the non-effective properties of the object" (1951, 42). What brought the response was not understandable in terms of isolatable properties, but was irreducibly *relational*. "Such 'relational' or 'configurational' stimuli," he reflected, "seem to be the rule rather than the exception" (1965, 68). What the herring gull chick was responding to, he concluded, was an *intensification* effect produced by deformations integrally affecting all of the elements present in their relation to each other. Integrally linked deformations are the province of topology. What Tinbergen had discovered was a *topology of experience* in which the diverse elements in play are swept together in the direction of their own integral variation, in a dynamic state of mutual inclusion.¹⁵

For Tinbergen this remained just a curious episode that did not prompt him to change his model. The animal, for him, remained a machine, albeit one of "great complexity" and not a little uncertainty, like a "slot machine" (1965, 68). His conclusion about supernormal stimuli? "No one has quite been able to analyze such matters," he noted with more than a hint of irritation at the uncooperative animals, "yet somehow, they are accomplished" (1965, 68). It is precisely the "somehow" of this accomplishment of baby birds to frustrate the learned expectations of the scientist that needs to be retained and integrated into our notions of animality. The failure of mechanistic assumptions of the traditional theory to account for the uncertainty-producing complexity of instinctual behavior cannot be compensated for by a trip to Las Vegas.

In order to take full stock of what supernormal stimuli tell us about instinct, the complex uncertainty they reveal at the heart of instinct must be construed in positive terms. The capacity to produce unexpected outcomes that are not related in linear fashion to discrete, isolatable inputs is an essential aspect of instinct. It must be acknowledged that instinctual

movements are animated by a tendency to surpass given forms, that they are moved by an impetus toward creativity. Further, this immanent impetus toward creativity must be recognized as a mental power, with mentality defined in neo-Humean fashion in terms of the *capacity to surpass the given*. The engine of this surpassing is not the recognition of a given form, but rather the integral deformation of indissociably linked qualities of experience: the spontaneous production of what Deleuze and Guattari call “blocks of sensation.”¹⁶ No efficient cause can be singled out as pushing this movement of experience’s self-surpassing from behind. The comparison to gambling is not entirely out of place. There is an element, not so much of blind mechanistic chance, as, to spin it positively, of *spontaneity*. Ruyer makes much of the fact that an instinct can trigger itself, even in the absence of any stimulus. He characterizes this ability as “hallucinatory,” in the sense that it is “improvised directly” on the percept (1958, 146–147). This capacity of spontaneous improvisation, he adds, must be considered a necessary dimension of all instinct. Another word for this native hallucinogenic power is the one Hume uses: *imagination*. Whatever the name, what we’re dealing with is not a slot machine but a *first degree of mentality* in the continuum of nature.¹⁷

In its failure to pin instinct to the objective givenness of an efficient cause, the ethologist has led us, in spite of himself, to the natural upwelling of the qualitative and subjective as a factor in nature: to improvisational blocks of sensation indicative of a mental power to spontaneously surpass the given. There is nothing “behind” this tendency toward the supernormal that is an inescapable dimension of instinct. The supernormal exerts a positive force that, rather than impel from behind in the manner of a mechanistic force encountering resistance (even minimized by well-oiled gears), positively pulls from ahead. The supernormal tendency is an attractive force that pulls experience forward, toward its own limit—that of the spontaneous passion for the mutual inclusion of the diverse, under integral transformation.

Tinbergen himself says as much. A cuckoo chick, he explains, possesses supernormal traits encouraging the female of another species whose nest the cuckoo parasitizes to take it under its wing and nourish it. The host female, Tinbergen remarks, isn’t “willing” to feed the invader. No, she positively “loves” to do it (1965, 67). She does not do it grudgingly, she does it

positively with passion. The force of the supernormal is a positive force. Far from being a mechanistic *impulsion*, it is a passionate *propulsion*. Spontaneous propulsion / mental power to surpass the given: *appetition* (Whitehead 1978, 33). Ruyer uses the term “auto-conduction” (self-driving) for this self-propulsion of animal life immanent to the movement of instinct (Ruyer 1958, 17, 214; 1953, 127–129). Instinct bears witness to a self-driving of life’s creative movement: to a self-expressive autonomy of vital creativity.¹⁸

The Spinozist lesson of the cuckoo and the herring gull: the animal’s enthusiasm of the body is one with its mental power of *appetition*,¹⁹ whose propulsivity advances an expressive autonomy swept forward by the vital gestures of the play of instinct.

It is easy to see the evolutionary advantages of a supernormal tendency: it gives instinct a creative margin of maneuver. The pull of the supernormal toward the relational variation of forms of life activity predisposes the animal to an enthusiastic acceptance of emergent variations. The passion of *appetition* pulls forward toward variations on forms of life, upstream of the adaptive pressures that make the final, irrevocable selection in accordance with the necessities of survival. There is no question that the environment exerts selective pressure. Adaptation is indeed the law of the external milieu. The lesson of the supernormal tendency is that there is more to nature’s ways than law-abiding behavior. To the law of selective adaptation, instinct opposes a power of improvisation more than eager to respond to the call for conformity to external demands with a supernormal twist. Instinct takes the liberty of inventing proposed solutions. It does not content itself with finding its solutions already sketched in negative outline in environmental constraints. Given the choice between conformity to the limitative demands of adaptation and death, it invents a third way: the excess invention of a more to life. An inventiveness immanent to the topology of experience, one with its lived qualities, at its most subjective leading edge, spontaneously responds to adaptive pressures. For this immanent inventiveness, some give the name “*desire*.”²⁰

Evolution, of course, never escapes adaptive selection. It is not as black-and-white as that. But that is not really the question. The issue is the well-foundedness of the neo-Darwinian principle according to which the only natural force for variation contributing to the genesis of forms of life is

that of mutation. Mutation is purely accidental, as are the environmental changes that come to exert selective pressure on the variations mutations produce. As a concept, the accidental refers to extrinsic relations between discrete elements operating according to purely mechanistic laws that suffer a glitch: efficient causality temporarily out of service. Accidents occur punctually, by blind chance. Spontaneity, on the contrary, concerns qualitative variations occurring integrally as a block.

Spontaneity does have a logic, even in its refusal to abide by the law. It follows the constitutively open logic of relational intensification, in the direction of the emergence of new forms. Parallel to mutation, there is another factor for the origination of variation: a power of experiential artifice no less immanent to the nature of instinct than instinct is immanent to nature. In the face of the accident, instinct is apt to fold back upon its own self-driving, its own self-varying propulsivity.²¹ Faced with a change in the environment exerting a selective pressure, it returns to its own margin of maneuver, carried forward in its performative gestures. To the conformity demanded by the selective pressures of adaptation, it opposes an immanent power of supernormal invention. Instinctive action plays its own natural creativity against the limitative conditions of the external milieu. Whether an instinctive action is induced by an external stimulus or a situation of external necessity or happens in the absence of either, there is a degree of “hallucinatory” freedom in the deformational variations it performs. Instinct, Bergson emphasizes, is not just triggered, it is *played* (1998, 145, 180).²² It plays itself, as it plays upon. It is always the playing out of a true act, never just a stereotype of action. The inherent supernormal element of the instinctual dynamism makes the difference between acting and playacting a naturally minimal one.

Instinct’s ludic folding back on its own intensity of self-driving variation slips a margin of play into the gaps, in the interactions between individuals, or between the individual and the environment. The hard necessities of life and the associated law of selective adaptation do not tell the whole story. There is always play in any mechanism, and instinct is no exception. In Ruyer’s words, there is always a “fortuitous fringe” of spontaneity propelling a creative autonomy of expression (Ruyer 1958, 142).

Returning to the hungry herring gull, if the chick’s tendency to improvise has a negligible effect on the effectiveness of the feeding behavior, its

supernormal gestures will be destined to fall back into the immanence of nature whence they came. End of story: they will be indifferent to the reproductive success of the species, and will not be extended along the evolutionary line. But it is not inconceivable that the chick's enthusiastic improvisation strikes a chord with the passion of the adult, resulting in an increase in the avidity with which she feeds her young. The increase in the efficiency of the feeding behavior increases the birds' reproductive success. The improvisation, and whatever lent itself to its invention in the instinctive makeup of the chick in its appetitive relation to what its surroundings offer in the way of experience-intensifying affordances, might then be extended down the line by the forces of selective pressure. The imaginatively subjective exception ends up becoming the biological rule. The supernormal normalizes. The tendency to supernormality will have effectively contributed to the evolutionary genesis of a lasting variation on a form of life.

Adaptability and creativity come together, without the difference between them ever erasing. In the process of evolution, their tendential operations interlace without losing their distinctness. They effectively meld, without coalescing. Ontogenetically speaking—that is, from the point of view of the genesis of forms, the origination of their variation—it must be said that the primacy is on the side of the creative element in instinct, as the mental motor of the movement of life's forms' becoming. This is because the supernormal tendency embodies a positive desire for variation. It is through that tendency that the appetite for life affirms variation. In nature “the initial fact is the primordial appetite” (Whitehead 1978, 48). Adaptation gives the supernormal tendency a pass, so that it continues down the road—or not. Selective adaptation exercises a checkpoint control whose power comes from the imposition of extrinsic constraints and which takes the form of a life or death sentence. It imposes the law of the given as a necessity of survival. The final control it exerts over what passes or doesn't in terms of novel variations amounts to a normative judgment. It amounts to a conformity test, a fitness test vis-à-vis the laws of necessity built into already-given conditions. Still, in the long run, what wins out is the improvisational power of supernormal variation that pulls forward beyond the given, toward an excess of lived quality. Its propulsivity takes primacy as originator of the forms of life submitted to the normative judg-

ment of adaptive selection. For corroboration of the excessiveness of this inventive impetus, it is enough to take a quick look around at the boundless exuberance of nature everywhere on display, of which the instinctive gesture's enthusiasm of the body is the exemplary expression. The story of evolution is a mad proliferation of forms so fertile as to defy the human imagination.

A philosophy of nature must take into account this primacy of self-varying expressivity, as well as its processual autonomy as a self-driving tendency. Its primacy must be recognized even where animal life is most firmly entrenched in the frame of its environment, with all the accidents and imperatives that come with that. Many animals entrench themselves in a *territory*. The proprietary occupation of a territory provides the instincts with a dedicated milieu for their unfolding, but under very particular conditions. Interspecific aggression, intraspecific gregariness, and courtship behavior are all territorial functions, as is, for that matter, the feeding behavior of the cuckoo and the gull, which presupposes a nest. From the perspective advanced here, our understanding of territorial functions must take into account the ways in which the unfolding of entrenched instinctive behaviors may nevertheless surpass their functional anchoring. Courtship, the territorial function around which most discussions of evolutionary exuberance revolve, would be just one particular case. Play, once again, provides the privileged angle of attack.

Play as an independent activity in its own right presupposes the territory. The territory is among its necessary conditions. Wolf cubs can only afford to abandon themselves to play in the proximity of the den that provides them safety from predation until they are big enough to become predators themselves. But play is not only conditioned by the territory, it is an operation *on* the territory. It is an operation of lived abstraction in which territorial functions are at the same time actively invoked and paradoxically placed in suspense, to novel effect.

In his discussion of the metacommunicational dimension of play, Bateson remarks that it is the reflexivity of play that invents the famous distinction between the map and the territory. It is this differentiation, he says, that creates the conditions of emergence of language. Language is distinguished by its reflexive capacity to double over on itself—to fold its operations back on themselves, to comment on what it is doing as it

is doing it. This metacommunicational back-bending enables language to map its own operations, immanent to their exercise. The same verbal acts that produce the distinction between the communicational level and the metacommunicational level collapse the levels together: you can't talk about language without using it. It is in one and the same gesture that the distinction between the levels of language is established, and that this reflexive distancing of language in relation to itself falls back into immanence, in the immediacy of the very act of enunciation that produces the distinction. This is true not only of statements that explicitly comment on the function of language. Humor is a good example of the operation of language winking at itself. But every act of language includes this reflexive element to a degree. Every statement plays a phatic role, defined as the effort to establish or continue communication. Every act of language performatively metagestures to its own communicational vocation. The difference between the levels of language is doubled by a zone of their indiscernibility. That zone is their mutual inclusion in the same act of language. The denotative and reflexive levels, communication and metacommunication, the map and the territory, are actively coimplicated in every gesture, including, paradoxically, those separating them out. The levels twist together in reciprocal presupposition, in the very act that makes their distinction, in a kind of instantaneous back-and-forth across their difference. Play, understood in its widest sense, is what invents this dynamic. In its narrower sense, as an arena of activity in its own right, it is what further develops the invention, intensely playing on the difference between the map and the territory to extract new surplus-value of life from it.

Human language carries the reflexivity of the communicative act and of its cartographic powers to their highest animal power. At the same time, the ludic possibilities of life are carried to a higher power, augmented by instantaneous back-and-forths between logical levels, between disparate domains of experience, and between those domains of experience and the creative movements by which they surpass themselves. From the most painful puns to the most exalted poetry, through every type and degree of humor and figurative usage, not to mention formalisms explicitly dedicated to operational mapping, language is forever busy flexing its reflexive capacities. It is always at work playing upon them.

Animal play rolls this reflexivity into the nonverbal gesture. A sequence of combatesque gestures charts the form of combat. It repeats the dynamic form of combat, without the combat. In so doing, it constitutes a directly lived, *enactive cartography*. This is not a cartography that limits itself to conforming to the given contours of the dynamic form it draws. It goes further, to improvise on the given form. It prolongs the gestural lines with which it draws the lived map of the given form, through stylistic extras and excesses that introduce the never-seen-before. Newness flourishes on the terrain of life. This kind of cartography *creates* the territory it maps, in new emergent variations on an existing arena of activity. In this ludic mode of reflexivity, it is essentially the future that is played. The ludic gesture mutually includes combat and game in each other in order to establish an instantaneous back-and-forth between the present and the future.

It goes without saying that these stretchings forward of the dynamic forms of life may sweep up the shape of the territory itself in movements of becoming. We saw that the supernormal stimuli that are the passion of herring gulls comprise relational blocks of experiential qualities whose integral linkage does not respect the distinction between figure and ground and are attributable to no isolatable property of either. It is not hard to imagine the supernormal tendency of the chick attaching to a structural element of the nest. It is not inconceivable that this deformational pressure might in the long run lead to an adaptive advantage associated with a variation in nest design that ends up passing the checkpoint of selection, all as a secondary effect of the animals' appetitive self-driving. In this case, the mental power of play will have modified the physical map of the territory.

Returning to play in the narrow sense, the instantaneous back-and-forth it effects between the present and futurity does the footwork for another stretch—that of the inventiveness of play-fighting stretching into the form of combat itself, across the zone of indiscernibility of their mutual inclusion. The variations on combat that are improvised in play might well lead to an evolution of its dynamic form. This is the idea, already discussed, that the game does not model itself on combat so much as combat modulates itself in play, flush with the gestures composing its enactive cartography. These cartographic gestures have the potential to reconfigure

the arena of activity of combat, just as the gull chick's impetuous peck might eventually lead to a reconfiguration of a physical territory. In the instantaneous back-and-forth between the present of play and the future of combat, a circuit of exchange is established by which play comes to express itself in combat, because combat came to express itself in play. This exchange occurs across their difference in communicative level, form, and type, as well as across the distance that separates playing from fighting as disparate arenas of activity, each with its own spatial and temporal parameters—or in the vocabulary of Félix Guattari, as different existential territories (Guattari 1995, 26–28, 53, and *passim*).

The concept of the existential territory is more encompassing than that of the territory in the strict sense. It refers to the territory in the physical sense but also takes in the dynamic forms, the forms of activity, that use the physical territory as the springboard for becoming. It further includes the mental relations between territories in play, and between the dynamic forms the territories host. The existential territory is a block of lived space-time, in which life thinks itself as it plays variation. The concept of existential territory also, and especially, refers to the stylistic composition of vital activities, including the instantaneous back-and-forths between their disparate arenas effecting a reciprocal modulation of those arenas, in such a way as to potentially prolong them evolutionarily (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, ch. 11).

In short, there is a reciprocal potentialization of play by combat, and combat by play: a mutual inclusion of disparate potential. Potentials for variation that are infolded in play, unfold in fighting. This *circuit of reciprocal potentialization* is enabled, on both sides, by the creation of a mutually inclusive zone of indiscernibility that doubles the affirmation of their difference with an included middle. Play and combat overlap, without the distinction between them being lost. They come together, without fusing together, across any distance in time and space. They co-occur for change, without coalescing—but with a crisscrossing in tone. Play, to the extent that it is successfully combatesqueness, is potentially deadly serious. Combat, to the extent that it is necessarily improvisational, carries a ludic element. The dominant tone differs from one side to the other, but the -esque is on one side *and* the other, stretched supernormally between.

In language, the corresponding zone of indiscernibility is verbal. As verbal, it lends itself to a purely logical definition, in terms of Russell's paradox, which is treated at length by Bateson. This paradox revolves around the impossibility of a class being a member of itself (the Epimenides paradox, or the paradox of the Cretan liar).²³ The map that coincides with the territory is another version of the same enigma. The zone of indiscernibility of play actively exemplifies this kind of paradox. In its enactive cartography, the composition of the map and the composition of the territory effectively coincide, in gesture. The integrally enactive and fully embodied nature of this enthusiastically supernormal cartography demands a definition in terms other than purely logical.

Bateson underlines the fact that there is one factor that is not touched by the suspension effected by the play-gesture's placing the ensuing activity in the conditional mode. That factor is *affect*. Even though a frightening ludic gesture does not denote what it would denote, it still provokes "the same terror" (Bateson 1972, 254). This is also the case, Bateson notes, for cinematic images. The scaryesque inspires fright. Ludic gestures, Bateson says, are "pure mood-signs" (253): pure signs of affect. When we say "pure" in relation to a sign, it can only mean a sign whose sense is inseparable from its performance, and thus whose expression is inseparable from its content. Pure signs are nondenotative signs that refer to nothing outside their own enactment, that are one with the enactment of their meaning. Pure signs are pure events, simultaneously reflexive (metacommunicational) and relational (occasioning a mutual inclusion of levels, forms, and arenas of activity). As always in play, denotation, highly artficed and constitutively struck with paradox, is eminently suspect. However, this does not prevent it from being true—affectively true. The truth of play is of an affective order.

Earlier, the enthusiasm of the body expressed by the animal abandoning itself to play was characterized as a vitality affect (or what was just called "tone"). Vitality affect is adverbial. It concerns the "how" of the performance: its manner of execution (its style). The how was bound up with the artifice of -esqueness. It was what Deleuze would call a "power of the false." The circuit of reciprocal potentialization expressed in the vitality affect of play is a power of the false in that it "posits the simultaneity of impossible presents" in its instantaneous back-and-forthing between

now and the future and between disparate domains of activity (Deleuze 1989, 131; trans. modified). The affect that is the truth of play adds a veridical dimension to vitality affect's power of the false. It truly qualifies the interaction under way as involving a known type of experience. It vouches for the correspondence between the two arenas in play, confirming and cementing the analogy: the same terror (albeit with a vital ludic difference). This kind of affect, concerned with adding a dimension of sameness, is what psychologists call a *categorical affect*. Categorical affect contributes the truth that vitality affect's power of the false strikes with paradox. The strike of paradox renders the gesture inventively "undecidable"—in addition to being true (Deleuze 1995, 65).

Categorical affect is the what of the play that comes with the how, on a different affective register from that of the how's vitality affect. Categorical affect is what the event is veritably about. It is the qualified content of the event of play: its "aboutness." It occurs on a different register from the dynamic ludic form of the performance that enacts it, as an aspect of strictly the same gesture. Vitality affect and categorical affect are co-occurring aspects of the play act. Vitality affect corresponds to the -esqueness of the act: its manner. Categorical affect is what the act manneristically confirms itself to be about. It is what is commonly called "emotion."²⁴

The categorical affect taken up in play is the one that is most salient in the interactions of the analog arena of activities being played upon. There is no combat without fear. Neither is there predation without terror. Fear and terror will therefore truly figure in the corresponding games. The same affect will figure on either side of the analogical gap opened by the play. Its figuring on both sides bridges the space between. The situation in all its facets will be bathed by that experiential quality, everywhere felt. The play nip says "this is not a bite" (this act does not denote what it would denote). At the same time, it says categorically: "this is nevertheless a situation of fear." This affective truth is the guarantor of the play partner's enthusiasm of the body. Without it, the game would lack intensity. The categorical affect in play is the leavening that allows the vitality affect to rise. Without it, the ludic gesture's force of induction would be negligible. The transformation-in-place that carries the force of the game would fall flat.

The same categorical affect perfuses the event, but not in a homogeneous way. It is apportioned asymmetrically. It is distributed differentially,

in the affectation of roles: scarer/scared, hunter/hunted, quarry/pursuer. The situation may well be one of fear on all sides, but each participant carries the fear according to a particular angle of differential insertion into the situation. The roles corresponding to the angles of insertion enact differentials of power. We saw earlier how the vitality affect signed by the -esqueness of the ludic dramatization carried transsituational potentials straddling distant existential territories. It was a *sign of potential*. Categorical affect, for its part, is a *sign of power*. The two are inseparable, like two sides of the same gestural coin.

The vitality affect expressing enthusiasm of the body establishes a *trans-individual link*.²⁵ The transformation-in-place accompanying the onset of play does not strike one without taking the other as well. When it strikes one, it hits two (at least two). The transindividuality of this transformation is what makes play a fundamentally relational process, from the moment its movement triggers. Its relationality potentially extends into a *transsituational link*. In the movement of play, existential territories enactively intersect and mutually modulate, across their difference, swept in the direction of novel expressions of their dynamic forms, each new play-move having the value of a fight-move in improvisational potential. Play becomes combatesquely, as combat becomes ludically. It is a question of a reciprocal deterritorialization, each arena stretched differentially into the other. This *double deterritorialization* is the very movement of lived abstraction, mobilizing itself toward invention. It reinforces and extends the cardinal gap between what a gesture denotes and what it would denote. It is what makes consequential the minimal difference separating what is from what *could be* that the ludic gesture paradoxically includes in its *doing*. It is the form of the creative force unleashed by play. It is what ensures the potentializing circuit between the present and the future.

Categorical affect fills the gap that is opened by vitality affect and is extended into a reciprocal deterritorialization. It is the asymmetrically shared quality of experience bathing the evolving situation on all sides, through and through. It contributes the “what” the lived abstraction deterritorializes. Its being found on all sides gives qualified, situational content to the extended event. Categorical affect is the immediately felt determination of what life is actively about in the eventful complexity of the moment.²⁶

In a nonplay situation, categorical affect registers the imperative to live the event in the dominant experiential key in which the situation customarily unfolds. In a nonplay situation of fear, we directly feel the imperative to fight or flee. Every fiber of our existence is interpellated. Inducted into the coming event, we brace ourselves and take the plunge. We are under obligation to act, marshaling all our strengths and capacities, in the name of our appetite for life to be able to continue on its self-driving path to the future. Our dawning actions absorb the given categorical affect, immediately transducing it into vectors of activity anchored in the situation and oriented to the event just beginning. This transduction of the content qualifying the situation into a relaunching of anchored and oriented expressive activity is the production of the event's corporeality. What play plays upon is this corporeality, ludically reinduced. Play registers the imperative to live the event in the dominant experiential tone of the played-upon situation, as taken up into the transsituational movement characteristic of play. It refracts the absorption of categorical affect.

It is worth pausing here to note two points. First, as the example of fear indicates, the "enthusiasm of the body" that is the expression of play's vitality affect cannot be plotted in any one-to-one relationship to a particular categorical affect. Affective vitality is intense, but is not necessarily "happy." Play, as Huizinga points out, is not reducible to "fun" in any categorical sense, certainly not to the sense of bland enjoyment the word has taken on in its contemporary usage.²⁷ Second, it is also necessary to use the distinction between "play" situations and "nonplay" situations advisedly. As the discussion of the reciprocally potentializing circuit between play and combat demonstrated, play and nonplay are not mutually exclusive categories. Like everything in this account, they are in a dynamic relation of mutual inclusion. They are coimplicated processual correlates. This is not a conclusion, but a starting point: a problematization. The mode of mutual inclusion must be rethought in every case. Given a ludic gesture, what variant of mutual inclusion it produced is the problem to be addressed.

Returning to corporeality, it absorbs the imperatives of the situation into its own production, progressively detailing the singular content of this event as it imperatively unfolds in its dominant categorical-affective key. The word "corporeality" is preferable to "embodiment." *Embodiment*

carries connotations of incarnation, as if the body were an empty receptacle into which some ideally preexisting content is poured.²⁸ Corporeality, on the other hand, is produced in, by, and for the event. It is less an incarnation of a something from without than an *incorporation into the event*, of a life entering a new pulse of its own becoming, registering the imperatives of that situation.

Corporeality is not separable from the action, or from the action's dynamic form of expression which is vitality affect. Corporeality is the immediately felt "aboutness" of that expression of vitality. Its absorption of aboutness ties its genesis to categorical affect. Corporeality arises with categorical affect's feeling of obligatory anchoring in the situation, and the palpability of the imperatives that come with the territory. The obligatory, the imperative: the important. Corporeality is *lived importance*. Vitality affect, it was said earlier, corresponds to *lived abstraction* and the deterritorialization associated with its playing out. Corporeality as lived importance is a necessary accompaniment to the vital play of abstraction that gives the situation what degrees of freedom may be -esqued out of it.²⁹

Lived importance is a noncognitive understanding of what is on about in this situation, one with the corporeal action occurring. It is directly incorporated into the event on an affective register, without a hint of reflection.³⁰ The element of reflexivity belongs, rather, to vitality affect in its relation to -esqueness. Corporeality is one of the factors reflected in the vitality affect. Vitality affect gives corporeality, as it happens, a supernormal twist that amounts to a performative comment on it. The corporeal intensity of the obligatory launching into action signed by a categorical affect such as fear, the bracing of a life into this pulse of action in that imperative affective key, resonates with the expressive intensity of vitality affect's enthusiasm of the body. The overall intensity of the event is amplified by the tension resulting from the feedback between the two poles.³¹

What is commonly called "the body" is the *bodying* of the event by this tension. Life is stretched taut between its obligatory anchoring in the imperatives of a given situation, and the supernormal tendency wringing from every twist and turn in the action a bid for freedom. There is no "the body." There is a life—stretched like a rubber band between the contrasting affective poles between which the progressive determination of the event will run.³² Bodying is being in this situation, pulled in two directions

at once: on the one hand anchored in what was given and, on the other, tending to finesse a way to surpass it; the back-pull of established necessity and the pulling forward to the new. Or to put it in other words: acquiescence to what is nonoptional on one side and the spontaneity of appetite on the other; pathos (the sinking-anchor feeling of acquiescence to the nonoptional) and the flight of fancy of passion; incorporation into the givenness of the event and the artificing of a way through it with supernormal zest; the corporeality of lived importance and the vitality of lived abstraction, in productively eventful tension. What effectively occurs is how this tension works itself out. Paradoxically, by this definition, “the” body is not reducible to corporeality. Restyled as bodying, “the body” includes the movement by which corporeality surpasses itself: it includes the mental pole of the event.³³

The failure of a ludic gesture in a play fight can be thought of in these terms. When the play gesture fails and the game turns into its analogue, it is because the weight of the categorical affect was too heavy. The imperative associated with it was felt with too much pathos, tripping up the supernormal tendency. The pull of corporeal truth of the situation was too strong. The gesture bodied forth too much in conformity with the felt imperatives of the arena of activity being played upon. The imperatives of the analog situation of fear say bite, truly. Play says nip, with style. When the play nip strikes too true, the game is dragged down by a bite that now denotes a bite. The -esqueness of the vitality affect is insufficient to maintain the suspension of combat. The commanding form of combat doesn’t just modulate from within, it takes over. It obligates the event to itself. The tension between incorporation into an event and finessing a supernormal way through it tips too far toward the former. The play gap closes. Paradox collapses into earnestness, the power of the false into truthfulness. The minimal difference between what gestures denote and what they would denote is erased. It is a case of too much corporeality, and not enough mental power exerted toward giving a supernormal twist to the bodying. Too much lived importance (however misplaced), and not enough lived abstraction. Too unimaginative a bodying.

Although lived importance is a noncognitive understanding, too immediate in its nonoptional bracing into the event to constitute a reflection, as an understanding it still qualifies as an act of thought. It is thought

at its lowest degree of creativity, anchored to a recognition of the given, which is to say keyed into the sameness of the present to the past. Lived abstraction, by contrast, is turned to the future, in an enactive thinking of the new. It is also a noncognitive understanding, but in future-oriented action.

What is intuition, if not the cooperation of the two? An alloying of them? A double dosing of the event with both—but with a bit extra on the side of lived abstraction, biasing the event more toward creative deterritorialization than obligatory anchoring. What is intuition, if not creative bodying? A bodying that plays itself out in a realization of the new?

For Bergson, instinct can only be thought in relation to intuition. He defines instinct as intuition that is “lived rather than represented” (1998, 175). *Lived intuition*. An intuition that is represented rather than lived would be a cognition, occurring on a very different reflexive level of life on which thinking is not flush with doing, and the words or images representing it are capable of shaking off the conditional mode of the performative in order to effectively pass as denoting what they denote. This is also a thinking that surpasses the given, to come to new conclusions, but one that contrives to remain in referential mode. Lived and/or represented, intuition belongs to the active field of consciousness (consciousness is just that, a “field” of activity, not a thing; Bergson 1998, 178). “Instinct,” in that it belongs to the field of consciousness, is “not situated beyond the limits of the mind” (1998, 175). There is a flash of mentality to it. Instinct is a mode of thinking, one with doing. Being directly lived, gestured rather than represented, its mentality is of a degree that is by nature resistant to cognitive definition. There is always something extra about it that enthusiastically eludes cognitive referencing. It is always thinking-doing in excess over denotation.

As we saw in the analysis of supernormal stimuli, instinct thinks gesturally in qualitative blocks. Its gestures effect and envelop “a complete recasting of the whole [*ensemble*]” involving a “correlative change of all the old elements” (Bergson 1998, 169). It bears on blocks of relation, ensembles of integrally linked experiential qualities. Bearing on qualities, it “distinguish[es] *properties*” rather than perceiving objects (1998, 189). It singularizes properties under variation-tending relational deformation, rather than perceive discrete objects in the mode of recognition. This

gives instinct its mental power, once again in the sense of the capacity to surpass the given: it gives it its constitutive tilt toward the supernormal. Instinct always has a first degree of appetitive mentality, a hunger for the supernormal, however weighed down and laid low it may be with inherited corporeality and its penchant for sameness. In the case of instinct, corporeality comes in the inherited form of a genetic memory of the adaptive imperatives of past situations, triggered into reactivation by a present perception.³⁴ It is the appetitive tendency of the supernormal to get in on the instinctive act that saves instinct from being the stereotyped reflex action it is too often reputed to be.

Bergson proposes a concept designed to replace the notion of cognition, so woefully misplaced with respect to instinct as lived intuition. Instinct, Bergson says, is not cognitive. It is sympathetic. And he couldn't say it any more clearly: "instinct is *sympathy*" (Bergson 1998, 176; emphasis added). "We call intuition here the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it" (2007, 135).³⁵ For the purposes of the present project, it is necessary to add a corrective to this definition, as well as to propose an extension of it. The corrective concerns the word "object." If thought instinctively distinguishes not ready-made objects but rather integrally interlinked experiential qualities, with an eye to their potential supernormal becoming, it would be more precise to say that sympathy "transports us into the heart of the *event*." A fuller formulation would be "we call instinct, in its aspect of lived intuition, the sympathy that transports us, with a gesture effecting a transformation-in-place, into the heart of a unique event that is just beginning, with which our life will now coincide, but whose outcome is as yet unknowable, and consequently inexpressible, laced as the movement toward it is with supernormal tendency."

The "as yet unknowable" part of the formulation concerns the "extension," which is precisely into and through the event. Transported into the heart of the event, we are already moved by what will ensue. What is to come is already welling. But what is welling is present as yet only in the first stirrings of potential. Potential is being actively expressed, but as a movement of the as-yet inexpressible, because still-to-come. Instinct, as lived intuition, is the gestured expression of the as-yet inexpressible. It

involves a living thinking-doing of the open-ended movement of expression, anchored in the situation, right down to its core, but leading tendentially beyond what is presently given in it.

What intuition adds to instinct is the corporeality of the present situation. Corporeality is a component pole of intuition, as defined above: the bodily tension between the lived abstraction of the tendency to surpass the given, and the lived importance of corporeality, with the accent on the former. If instinct were lived without a boost of intuition, it would only be able to improvise supernormally on what it had inherited from the past and, lacking an anchoring in the present, would always be hallucinatory, even with a stimulus. Intuition grounds instinct's corporeal inheritance from the past in the corporeality of the present, enabling it to effectively grasp the supernormal potential of the situation. It enables instinct to factor in the imperatives of the situation, the more effectively to maneuver its supernormal appetite past them. Intuition adds its own dose of appetitiveness to the mix (if it didn't have its own appetite for life, why would it bother to get mixed up in events in the first place?). Intuition's double polarity capacitates instinct to factor into its operation what is presently important, while at the same time maintaining instinct's appetitive tendency to surpass. This effectively increases instinct's improvisational prowess. It makes it more pragmatically able to grasp the inexpressible, the better to expressively -esque its movement. Each lived instinctive act bears a degree of intuitive enabling. To what degree depends on many factors, including but not limited to an animal's level of evolutionary complexity.

It may not have escaped notice that the definitions of instinct and intuition crisscross—as all the distinctions deployed in this essay inevitably do. Instinct already bears the supernormal tendency—albeit in a hallucinatory mode if left to its own devices—whose accentuation defines intuition. And intuition already bears a polarity between supernormal tendency and corporeality—albeit of a different tense, present rather than past. As always, it is not a question of the cut-and-dried logic of category separation and its self-frustrating law of the excluded middle. It is always a gesturally fresh question of the differential mutual inclusion of coimplicating processual correlates.

The paradox is always: two modes of activity in mutual inclusion are so entwined as to be degrees of each other. Yet their differential remains.

When they come together, they are performatively fused without becoming confused. This means that they can remix, when it occurs to them to come performatively together again. Thus in the logic of mutual inclusion, instinct and intuition can be said to be on the same continuum, separated only by degrees (as when it was said that instinct is lived intuition at the first degree of mentality), and they can be said to mix, across a difference in kind (as when it was said that instinct is pragmatically enabled by intuition). In the logic of mutual inclusion, difference of degree and difference in kind are actively inseparable, two sides of the same processual coin. The continuum on which instinct and intuition differ by *degrees* is that of animal bodying. The remix in which they come-together-again across their difference in *kind* recurs punctually in animal bodying's every gestured event.

There is a one-word synonym for differential mutual inclusion: life. Life lurks in the zone of indiscernibility of the crisscrossing of differences, of every kind and degree. At each pulse of experience, with each occurring remix, there emerges a new variation on the continuum of life, splayed across a multiplicity of complicating distinctions. The evolution of life is a continual variation across recurrent iterations, repeating the splay always with a difference. Because of this recurrent crisscrossing of involved differences, evolution is never linear.

This same logic applies to all contrastable terms. Which way it makes sense to construe their contrast, as a difference in degree or a difference in kind, will vary according to the problem and the particular concept-building task at hand. The only way of avoiding this oscillation is to replace both terms with a notion of *modal difference*, where the distinctions to be made are between modes of activity (qualitatively different dynamic forms). Modal difference concerns differentials between *tendencies* that are variably *coactive* in every event, their coactivity iteratively expressing itself in an emergent line of continual variation. Every distinction made in this essay has been between contrasting tendencies. Modal logic is a radically event-based activist logic that avoids both the implicit presupposition of substance carried by the notion of difference in kind, and the connotation of measurable quantity carried by the notion of difference in degree. Tendencies are neither substantive nor quantifiable. The logic of mutual inclusion is ultimately a modal logic of continual variation. This logic be-

gins to germinate anywhere tendencies are taken seriously, and with them the qualitative and subjective factors of nature. Most especially, the super-normal tendency of play.³⁶

But all of this still doesn't tell us in what way instinct is sympathy. At this point in the account, that is the crucial question, because it points us straight in the direction of this essay's stated aim: to begin to express what animals teach us about politics.

As in the present account of animality, Bergson emphasizes that the operations of instinct are transindividual, and that they are not reducible to an accumulation of accidental variations: "The effort by which a species modifies its instinct, and modifies itself as well [. . .] does not depend solely on the initiative of individuals, although individuals collaborate in it, and it is not purely accidental" (Bergson 1998, 170–171).³⁷ The trans-individuality of instinct is easy to see. It is evident that a tracing of the play partner's coactivity is included in negative outline in the -esqueness of the ludic gesture. The ludic gesture is impotent unless it captures the other's attention. In the way it captures attention, the gesture sketches the anticipatory outline of the partner's coming countermoves. The ludic gesture is a sign of active potential not only in the animal who executes it, but also in the other, whose own appetition joins forces with that of the author of the gesture, with all the immediacy of the transformation-in-place the gesture effects. The ludic gesture immediately implicates at least two, at a distance, and in their individual differences and differing roles, in an instantaneous back-and-forth of dynamic point and counterpoint. In keeping with the logic of mutual inclusion, one can assign a difference in kind to intuition and sympathy, as two sides or qualitatively different aspects of this joint activity of transindividual mutual inclusion. Intuition is everything that goes into "lowering the barriers of space" to effect this dynamic mutual inclusion (Bergson 1998, 177; trans. modified). Sympathy is the transindividual becoming brought into being by intuition's acting out. Sympathy is *the mode of existence of the included middle*.

The act of intuition dramatically mutually includes at least two non-coinciding perspectives. It plays the in-between. In the immediacy of its enaction, it is already transindividual, in the sense of inhabiting the gaps between individual perspectives. It manages this without rising to a higher supplementary dimension that would give it an overlook upon the

situation, as if from outside it. That is what cognition does. Intuition, in the directness of its thinking-doing, plays the immanent in-between gapping the situation.

In Ruyer's vocabulary, this immediate dynamic straddling of disparate perspectives without the vantage point of a supplementary dimension is called *absolute survey* (absolute in the sense that it is overlookesque without the outside vantage point that would make it merely relative to the situation, in external oversight of it). Absolute survey is another name for the mode of existence that is sympathy, induced into being, in the act of intuition. Ruyer also calls it *primary consciousness*, corresponding to a first degree of mentality (for the jointness-in-difference of disparate perspectives in absolute survey already surpasses the disjunctiveness of the given, without erasing it; Ruyer 1958, 95–131).³⁸

It is not that an animal has a consciousness of the immanent in-between that is the absolute survey of sympathy. Rather, this immanent in-between is consciousness. Primary consciousness is the being of a first degree of mentality: an enactive being of relation, for supernormal twisting. Absolute survey is the field of consciousness, in that the field of consciousness is “coextensive with life” (Bergson 1998, 186) under the propulsion of its self-driving tendency to bring itself to new active expression.³⁹ The mode of existence of sympathy is the being of the thinking-doing of life. It must be thought of as a verb rather than a substantive, because in the logic of mutual inclusion there is nothing “behind” activity. There are only interlacing modes of activity differentiating themselves as aspects or sides of the same event.⁴⁰

Primary consciousness is noncognitive and nonrepresentative. Logically speaking, it is neither inductive nor deductive but *abductive*.⁴¹ It plays the gaps of the immanent in-between with that minimum of difference that is the conditional gap between what this life, with which sympathy is coextensive, “is” and “could be.” The being of consciousness includes this conditional duplicity, suspending reference and representation. This makes it already reflexive, in that the act of intuition bringing it to be already carries in its incipency a vital movement that reflects the immediacy of the event in its own possibilities.

Instinct is sympathy, at every level, in all its forms. The peck of the herring gull chick is already an exercise in sympathy. It traces, in its own dy-

namic form, the negative outline of the action of the adult that will relay it. The young gull's passion includes the adult's, in immanent counterpoint. The same must be said of human language. Even the most solitary human language act, Deleuze and Guattari insist, holds in immanent counterpoint an entire "people to come" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 345–346, 377; 1986, 18). Language, even the most high-level and elaborated, participates in primary consciousness. The tip of the tongue and typing finger dip into it at every waggle. If instinct is sympathy, then language is instinctive—no less so than a wolf cub's gambol or the baby bird's avid peck.

We now have all the pieces in place to broach the subject of what animals teach us about politics. But it is important to be clear. It is in no way a question of rethinking politics on the model of the game. It's just not about modeling at all. What animals teach us about politics bears the same relation to the modeling of play as the ludic gesture bears to what it would denote. What it is is a question of *metamodelization*, just as in play it is a question of *metacommunication*.⁴² What is necessary is to open and maintain a gap between the theory of animal play from which this reflection has unfolded, and the politics that might flow from it. For this task, there is no interest in dallying in any supposed dialectic between play and combat. The reciprocal deterritorialization through which play extends itself can straddle several domains of activity, and extends into interspecies relations (as in symbiosis). The in-between is many-faceted. The between-two, which dialectics takes as primary, is in fact a limit-case.

Instead of modeling play, it is a question of extracting from play that which in play surpasses its givenness. It is necessary to *extract the ludic from play*, in order to stage it in an even more extended and autonomous manner. It is necessary to put the ludic into an even intenser movement of transformation, vibrating with an even more vivacious and encompassing enthusiasm of the body. It is necessary to do this with performative thought-gestures.

The ludic element in play, -esqueness, comes with a transindividual transformation-in-place launching a movement of potential evolution that is fundamentally self-driven, in an autonomy of inventive expression. This is the principle of the primacy of the supernormal tendency in animal life. However, we saw that this transformation-in-place does not launch without the ensuing autonomy of expression being weighed

down in a dependence on the already expressed: an obligatory taking on of the imperatives of the situation as given. The focus should not be on the reductive notion of a dialectic between play and combat, but rather on this reciprocal presupposition between the autonomy of expression on the one hand and the dependence on the already-expressed on the other: between lived abstraction and lived importance.

Abstraction lived through the autonomy of expression corresponds to the *aesthetic*, which in turn corresponds to the surpassing of the given in the conditional mode of the production of possibility. Lived importance, for its part, corresponds to the *ethical*: the anchoring of incorporated experience in the imperatives expressed in the already given.

What we learn from animals is the possibility of constructing what Guattari calls an *ethico-aesthetic paradigm* of natural politics (as opposed to a politics of nature).⁴³ The idea of natural politics has been well and truly debunked by critical thinking over the last century. Now it is time to relaunch it, well and -esquely—marshaling all the powers that the false nature provides.

PROPOSITIONS

What Animals Teach Us about Politics

(Preliminary Sketch, to Be Filled in according to Appetite)

1. In the wake of the work of Bruno Latour, many have embraced the project of integrating into our conceptions of political practice a regard for “nonhuman agents.” Some, concerned to avoid the implicit anthropomorphism of designating the other only as the negative of us humans, have begun to speak of “nonconventional entities.”⁴⁴ The lesson that the herring gull chick teaches us is that when we take into account the supernormal tendency that sweeps all of us up, human and otherwise, it is necessary to recognize that *we are our own nonconventional entities*. Corollary: we are able to surpass the given to the exact degree to which we assume our instinctive animality.

2. A politics that reestablishes ties with our animality, in its immanent movement of naturally supernormal self-surpassing, *cannot be based on a normative ethics of any kind*. Animal politics recognizes no categorical im-

perative. It lives the imperatives of the given situation, immanent to that situation, and it lives in paradox. Such a politics does not recognize the wisdom of utility as the criterion of good conduct. Rather, it affirms ludic excess. It does not cleave to the golden mean. It excessively lives out the in-between. Its ethico-aesthetic engagements play out between the imperative mood of lived importance, and lived abstraction's vitally affective autonomy of movement, with the latter taking primacy. This primacy, it is crucial to point out, is processual, not moral. The supernormal tendency is the leading edge of becoming. It blazes life's paths. But at the same time, every newly blazed path matures into a well-trodden road. What surpasses establishes itself, if it passes the test of selective adaptation. When it passes the test, it passes into capture, afterward to be imposed as a given. It is of the process of nature, and the nature of process, for ludic excess to pass into importance.

This is nothing less than the process of nature, in its widest sense. Thus it is not simply a question of choosing one over the other, taking creative self-surpassing over dependence on the already-expressed, because each gives affordance to the other. Lived importance gives creativity something to finesse, and creativity returns the favor with a yield of newly minted givens. The given and what surpasses it are joined at the gestural hip in a cycle of coproduction, each in its own way destined for the other. Affirming one is tantamount to affirming the cycle of life in which they are mutually included.

Surpassing normative ethics requires refraining from dividing these two tendencies against each other, in an attempt to exclude one of them (the supernormal, of course). What it suggests instead is to find ways to collectively inhabit the dynamic in-between of their processual interlacing, in order to compose with their difference, recognizing the necessity for survival of the anchoring in lived importance, all the while pulling the gestural strings activating the processual primacy of lived abstraction in the genesis of forms of life. Considering the cycle that dynamically joins these two poles of life's collective bodying, it is as accurate to say that the supernormalizing movement of vital inventiveness is in the service of the production of lived importance in emergent variations, as it is to say that lived abstraction is in forward flight away from the imperatives that come with lived importance. It's a matter of perspective. It's like the debate in

neo-Darwinian theory about whether the gene is in the service of the unique life of organism, or the organism is in the service of the reproduction of the gene. The logical mutually inclusive answer is both the one and the other (and the not exactly either—the one, the two, and the included middle of the processual zone of indiscernibility).

3. It follows from Proposition 2 that the political animal *does not recognize any rigid opposition between the frivolous and the serious*, which is to say, between the enthusiastic expenditure of creative energies and the anchor of function and utility. It nourishes itself on the productive paradox of their processual alliance. Nonnormative ethico-aesthetics resists, with bursts of supernormal propulsion, the leaden demands, so frequently heard, that one's actions be "relevant" at all cost and that they "contribute to society" in a way that is already recognizable. The animal politics of education seriously needs to play on such demands.

4. Political thought flourishes with noncognitive primary consciousness. This is thought in the act, flush with vital gesture. Noncognitive consciousness is *actively nonrepresentative*. But it is still, for all of that, already reflexive. It is reflexive in the special sense that the gestures it bodies forth open and maintain the gap between "is" and "could be." Being and becoming reflect each other in the unicity of the ethico-aesthetic gesture. Primary consciousness is enactive. All of this suggests a politics of the performative gesture, alloying itself with practices of improvisational and participative art in the wild (beyond the territory of the gallery). Ethico-aesthetic = aesthetico-political.⁴⁵ This orientation of animal politics awakens a certain suspicion with respect to concepts, such as Bruno Latour's, of a "parliament of things." Not least of all because the world is, in point of processual fact, populated by events more so than things. The world is made of verbs and adverbs more primordially than nouns and adjectives. One sniff at the parliament of things, and the animal's expressive event is apt to snarl: smells of representation.⁴⁶ One more effort to let nonrepresentational politics play to the supernormal hilt!

5. Animal politics is also obliged to *distance itself from the concept of agency*. The transindividuality of the process of vital becoming complicates the

question of agency. The problem was signaled earlier: no efficient cause can be isolated behind the movement of experience's self-surpassing. This self-driving movement triggers itself, in an irreducibly relational manner. It is more a question of catalysis than of linear causality. The catalysis is experiential: directly lived, on a qualitative register, in the transindividual between of absolute survey. Its lived, qualitative nature obliged us to call it "subjective," in spite of its strangeness with respect to the usual understandings of the word, and to call its inventive potential to surpass the given a "mental power," even though it is in the tightest of processual embraces with corporeality. It is crucial to register this strangeness. Particularly when it comes to what is traditionally considered to be the necessary complement of the subject—the object. The eventful processual subjectivity at issue here has no object as its structural complement. It only has things to come, and these are less "things" than processual supplements—surplus-values of life. Most of all, there should be no illusions that the mental power of processual subjectivity resides in a "mind" (individual or collective). It is a subjectivity not only without an efficient cause behind it, but without a subject behind it either. The mental power of this processual *subjectivity-without-a-subject* may be considered spiritual, if by that is simply meant intensely, relationally enlivening.⁴⁷ It makes for spirited acts, with which it absolutely coincides.⁴⁸

6. Although nonnormative, ethico-aesthetic politics is not without criteria of evaluation. The evaluation bears on the intensity of the mental potentials for variation put into play. Given the noncognitive nature of ethico-aesthetic activity, the evaluation necessarily pertains to affect. It pertains to affect in both its aspects, vitality affect and categorical affect, taking stock of their mutual inclusion in each and every life situation, as signs of potential and signs of power, respectively, with these further correlating to the autonomy of expressivity on the one hand and the dependence on the already-expressed on the other. Playing between the still-to-come-to-full-expression on the one hand and the givenness of the already-expressed on the other, *animal politics* is a politics of expression indissociable from an *affective politics*. The main criterion available for the corresponding evaluations is the degree to which the political gesture carries forward enthusiasm of the body.

Intensity is the supreme value of this manner of politics, for the simple reason that it is experienced as a value in itself, a-body with the pure mood-signs of ludic expressionesqueness. One doesn't "do" enthusiasm of the body, in the way we say in current usage that we "do" politics. Enthusiasm of the body is lived in and for itself, purely for the novel quality it gives to experience's unfolding, and especially for its intensity, that little something extra. The excess element of an act's intensity constitutes, in itself, an immediate surplus-value of life and, in its unfolding, an emergent surplus-value of life yet-to-come—doubly worth it.

The affirmation gestured forth with enthusiasm of the body is at once ethical and political. In its absence, life tends to mire in the pathic tendency to respond corporeally to an irritation or a prodding in the negative, by avoidance or denial.⁴⁹ When life falls too much under the hammer of pathic necessity, it loses its spring, and the less surplus-value it generates. The more life activity falls under the sway of the pathic tendency, the more it suffers from the corresponding deficit of passion. There is no transcendent foundation for the aesthetico-political preference for surplus-value of life. It's simply that surrendering one's life to the travails of the pathic is hardly worth the pain. Anything that springs to life feels that immediately. This is a felt self-evidence that operates as a lived criterion of evaluation immanent to vital experience.

7. Enthusiasm of the body doesn't sweep up one without sweeping up at least two. It marks an instantaneous transformation-in-place that is immediately transindividual in nature. Thus the ethico-aesthetic paradigm calls for a *politics of relation*. A second criterion of evaluation flows from this, closely linked to the criterion of antipathic intensity: that which carries the mutual inclusion of the disparate and the differing to a higher power is to be affirmed. This involves -esquing gestures that produce greater degrees of copossibility, more embracing immanent vistas of absolute survey unfoldable into proliferations of variation. It involves intensifying life by enveloping in each circuit of reciprocal potentialization a growing number of existential territories, tending to the supernormal maximum, sharing out surplus-value of life as amply as the artifices of lived abstraction will permit. Whitehead defines the appetitive direction of life's movement as an aim toward intensification, which he in

turn defines in terms of the capacity of a becoming to hold a maximum of contrastive terms in itself without imposing the law of the excluded middle on them. He equates this aim toward intensification (here, the supernormal tendency) as the aesthetic process of appetition, which he further equates with ethical “progress.”⁵⁰ Animal politics is an ethico-aesthetics of appetition’s self-driving toward ever more inclusive immanent excess.

8. The exhortation is often heard, in politics as in cultural theory, to be true to the context of one’s actions, by conscientiously taking into account the history and the habitus of place, and owning the implicit obligations embedded in it. This exhortation has become a familiar tune, and is too often repeated as a refrain, in a tone of piety. The political animal vivaciously recognizes the imperatives of the context it finds itself in (under the enactive aspect of “corporeality”). The ethico-aesthetic of animal politics is fundamentally situational. But there is an important difference between context and situation (Massumi 2002, 212–213).

Context is a general concept. It has to do with what is embedded in place in a general way particular to that place—that is, in a way that applies generally to what occurs there. What occurs is then taken to be adequately understood as a particular instance of the general rule. When the imperatives in place in a given context are analyzed, it is typically in terms of the formal and informal codes governing interactions on the ground and the roles conventionally associated with them. A code is an abstraction whose ruling form generally preexists the particulars of its contextual enactment (this is true even when the code is combinatory or generative in the structuralist sense). A situation, on the other hand, has to do not with particularity, but with singularity.

The singular is in opposition to the particular as much as to the general (they’re a package deal). Everything in a situation is potentially swept up in the movement of enaction, with an open-endedness as to the final form that will come to be determined, in a singular becoming catalyzed by the performative gestures taking place. This singularization even potentially affects the codes in place, which are susceptible to their own becoming, across supernormal suspensions of their already given form. Situations are not about conformation (conformity-producing application of a rule).

They are about in-formation (a taking-form or a form-finding immanent to the situated action).

The movement toward the determination of new forms, or variations on existing forms, passes tendentially through the situation, toward a new and different situation that will succeed it. This potentially involves a passage from one arena of activity to another. The movement of in-formation is by nature transsituational. To the extent that the in-formational process repeats given forms or formal patterns inherited from the past, it is only because the transsituational movement was able to regenerate the previous form of the given by immanent means, drawing on its own processual resources. What is thought of as the conformal application of a preexisting rule is actually, processually speaking, a becoming-limited to the narrow parameters set by an inherited imperative to resprout the forms of the past. Coding, by this view, is a limitative lowest degree of supernormal tending. Whitehead explains that what facilitates this code-bearing conformation to the past (what in this essay has been analyzed as a dependence on or acquiescence to the given) is not the staying in place of already determined forms, and not even their transmission as ready-mades, but rather germs of in-formation, embryonic form-finders that have been planted in the territory, and are repeatedly replanted by mechanisms of reuptake immanent to each successive situation, carried by the transsituational tendencies passing through them like an infection. These are genetic factors that remain in the catalytic mix, infectiously resprouting conformal form from a foothold immanent to the processual movement (Whitehead 1967, 203–204). They operate on what Deleuze and Guattari would characterize as the micropolitical level (1987, 196, 199, 213, 216, 292; Massumi 2009).

The micropolitical is the dimension of events in which supernormal tendencies of decoding and deterritorialization make themselves excessively felt. The micropolitical is not the opposite of the macropolitical. It is its processual correlate. It makes no more sense to speak of the micropolitical outside its mutual inclusion with the macropolitical—the level of codes and general rules and normative ethics—than it does to separate lived abstraction from corporeality, or categorical affect from vitality affect. But it is also crucial to bear in mind that the mutual inclusion of the micro- and macropolitical, like all mutual inclusions, is not just differen-

tial but asymmetrical. There is a creative excess of intensity on the side of the micropolitical. The micropolitical is about vital gesture, supernormally oriented. The macropolitical is about conformation. The distinction between them is thus not one of scale, but of qualitatively different modes of activity, or contrasting tendencies.

The double proposition coming out of these considerations is: *animal politics resists the pieties of context*, and to succeed in that task, it must *practice micropolitical vigilance* toward infectious conformal germs.⁵¹ In keeping with its transsituational ethic, animal politics micro-spikes the element of dependence on the already-expressed with a liberal dose of improvisational exaggeration and deformative-transformative enthusiasm—in a word, creative autonomy of expression.

9. The ethico-aesthetic paradigm of animal politics is particularly attentive to modes of thought enacted in nonverbal gestures. But this special attentiveness to lived abstraction on nonverbal levels in no way implies a negligence of language. As we have seen, the instinctive acts of animals already include language in potential, in their ludic element. The vital gestures of animal play display a reflexivity in-the-act that really produces the conditions of human language. Animal politics, and its metamodelization, *make language play*. To play language means making *instinctive usage* of it. The instinctive usage of language consists in a gestural employment of words as catalyzers of language acts effecting direct transformations-in-place that shake up corporeality and rally appetite, propelling life activity in the direction of transsituational variation.⁵²

10. The reservations the ethico-aesthetic paradigm holds in relation to cognitive models of thought involve pronounced misgivings toward any logic built around the principle of the excluded middle—but by no means toward logic as a whole. *Animal politics actively affirms a logic of mutual inclusion*. It greets the included middle with enthusiasm, in the form of performed effective paradoxes.

The logic of mutual inclusions knows nothing of exclusive oppositions. It recognizes contrasts aplenty, but the contrastive terms are always understood to be in a relation of reciprocal presupposition as modalities of action differentially belonging to the same process; in a word, as dynamisms. As

contributing factors to the process, the contrasting dynamisms interlace without their difference being effaced. They performatively fuse without becoming confused. In their differing dynamism, they are modal factors: modes of activity. Being modal factors of activity, they are essentially in movement. Although it is sometimes necessary to construe their contrast in terms of differences of degree on a qualitative continuum of activity, or even as differences of kind entering into various mixtures, the way in which they are ultimately distinguished is by the orientation of their movement. In other words, they are best treated as *tendencies*.

Tendencies are differentiated by the poles between which their vector stretches: they are defined by their limits. The logic of mutual inclusion does not prioritarily concern itself with forms, or objects, or even subjects. Tendency is what feeds it. It is in the interlacing of tendential movements that forms, objects, and subjects are constituted, in perpetual emergence and continual variation. As Bergson emphasizes, tendencies are not distinguished from each other in the mutually exclusive manner that forms, objects, and subjects distinguish themselves. Tendencies can combine forces without mutually excluding each other. In fact, it is their vocation to mix. Even though they are logically distinguishable by their polarity and orientation, they never occur naturally alone. Every situation always activates a mix of them. In every situation, they co-occur without coalescing. They resonate or interfere with each other, stunt or prolong each other, sap or boost each other, capture each other or enter into mutually beneficial symbiosis. In Bergson's vocabulary, they "interpenetrate" in a zone of indiscernibility, all the while remaining logically distinct when considered as vectors moving through that zone.

The ability to interpenetrate, to effectively mix without getting mixed up, is a defining characteristic of mentality according to Bergson.⁵³ Tendencies are nothing other than the creative movement of the mental pole of nature, "creative" because from their dynamic interpenetrations emerge qualitative variations. Tendencies, in their "mental" movement, constitute subjectivities-without-a-subject: sheer doings, with no doer behind them—with nothing behind them but their own forward momentum.⁵⁴ These self-propel, by nature, toward the surpassing of what is objectively given. Their dynamic form is nature's in-the-making. Everywhere in nature it is a question of creative mixes of tendencies of varying degrees of

self-driving power, corresponding to degrees of integral mentality or absolutely self-surveying consciousness. These degrees of consciousness are always enactive. They are thinking-doings. They are also at least germinally reflexive, in the manner evoked earlier in the discussion of absolute survey and primary consciousness. From the point of view of the affect with which they come, they are thinking-feelings a-doing.

The tendential logic of mutual inclusion assigns two tasks to the metamodelization of the creative life of the animal. First, its theory of the political must always start with the gesture of analyzing mixes, understood not as combinations of terms in external relation to one another (combinatorics, part-by-part assemblage, hybridization) but in terms of mutual inclusion, with the effective paradoxes that go with that. The evaluation of vital events must begin with an evaluation of the tendencies in play. Once their limit-poles and orientations are sorted out, the question becomes the degree and nature of their participation in the enactive gestures in play, the ensuing movements they catalyze, and the existential territories these movements involve. The two evaluative criteria discussed above pertaining to intensity are grounded in this analysis of tendential mixtures, and owe their discriminative capacities to it.⁵⁵

The second task is reflexive. It consists in developing tools for the metadescription of tendential mixes, continually adding to the toolbox as new singular situations arise and beg for an analysis truly capable of taking their singularity into account. The metamodelization of animal life and natural politics consists in producing a conceptual field in which to house the growing menagerie of singular understandings. This requires a metaconceptual activity dedicated to constructing ways of mutually including in thought an always expanding menagerie of singular modes of tendencies' processually belonging to each other, all the while meticulously respecting their irreducibly contrastive nature (i.e., without generalizing, and without mistaking their singularity for a particular instance of a general rule). This thinking of participatory thinking-doings cannot afford to stray far from the situations and events through which tendencies interpenetrate. Metamodelization must be resolutely pragmatic, even as it is constructing lived abstractions of the highest order.⁵⁶

The pragmatic necessity requires each project of metamodelization to imagine for itself what a philosophical laboratory adequate to its aims could

be. Every metamodelization needs to construct a *philosophical laboratory*. For that it needs techniques. If ethico-aesthetic politics is a politics of relation, if its metaconceptual constructions bear on belonging, then the necessary techniques can be nothing other than live techniques of abstractive relation: relational techniques of lived abstraction.⁵⁷ The metamodelization of animal politics must open its own operations to the supernormal tendency to surpass the given with which it is prioritarily concerned. A mental power to surpass the given is a definition of speculation. The form of pragmatism at issue here is *speculative pragmatism*. A warning: there are many forms of speculative thought and pragmatism that are not tendential, creative, or concerned with developing the singular logic of mutual inclusion (buyer beware).

Note: The purpose of the warning is to signal a divergence between the speculative pragmatism developed here and, on the one hand, pragmatic philosophies for which function and utility are primary and, on the other hand, speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. As a substance-based ontology, OOO, as developed by Graham Harman (2005), is fundamentally at odds with process-oriented ontogenetic philosophies whose ultimate notions are activity and event rather than substance, and whose metaphysical task is to think subjectivities-without-a-subject rather than the object without the subject. Quentin Meillassoux's influential version of speculative realism sternly applies the law of the excluded middle, or the law of noncontradiction, and deals with the aporias associated with it by appealing not to the positivity of mutual inclusion but to contingency, understood not creatively but negatively, as the ultimate impossibility of applying the law of the excluded middle in a way that effectively excludes uncertainty (Meillassoux 2008).⁵⁸ Speculative pragmatism, on the other hand, passionately embraces uncertainty, with all the productive powers of effective paradox. It embraces uncertainty, but takes no interest in absolute contingency, on the processual grounds that wherever thought can penetrate there has always already been a taking-determinate form, so that the world is littered with the leavings of past emergences. For this reason, contingency is never absolute, because what unfolds from it has to pick a path through the leavings, which constrain its course. In Whitehead's terms, the unfolding of contingency is always relative to the "settled world." Even quantum contingency in physics is either captured into

higher-level physical processes that are not purely contingent (the structure and periodicities of the atom, for starters) or perishes no sooner than it arises, leaving no effect and thus having no effective existence (virtual particles in the quantum void). Anywhere other than at the ineffective vanishing point of existence, absolute contingency is a purely formal creature of logic (as is contradiction, for different reasons pertaining to the speciousness of the negative; for Bergson's classic critique of the negative, see Bergson 1998, 272–298). Contingency as it occurs in the world is in the constitutive gaps factoring into all emergences and, again, in the gaps between settlements (captures). Contingency as it pertains to emergence and insubordination to capture must be thought positively in terms of spontaneity, not negativized as accidental (the mere lack of a sufficient cause) or assimilated to the merely logically uncertain.⁵⁹

11. Animal politics is a pragmatics of mutual inclusion. This mutual inclusion even applies, or especially applies, to the generic difference between the human and the animal. Generic differences, such as the separation between animal species, belong to the logic of mutual exclusion. When something exceeds or escapes containment in its assigned generic category, its singularity appears, in the logic of mutual exclusion, as a negative, as a lack or deficiency. The only alternative is between being subsumed under the proper category and indifference: between generic identity and undifferentiation, too rigid distinction or indistinction. Generic difference is not really about difference: it is about mutually exclusive identities.

The animal thinking-doing of politics refuses to recognize generic difference as foundational, precisely in order to think the singular. Its natural logic of mutual inclusion—the paradoxical logic of that which interpenetrates without losing its distinction—is designed to avoid the infernal alternative between identity and undifferentiation.

For the logic of mutual inclusion, indifference is not the only alternative to mutual exclusion (contra Agamben).⁶⁰ It recognizes that there are zones of indiscernibility between species (a concept whose dependence on the logic of the excluded middle is under heavy attack from within biology itself, which, the more it becomes attuned to nature's continual production of variation, the less able it is to fix rigid generic, not to mention genetic, differences between animal populations).⁶¹ The logic of mutual

inclusion conceives of these zones of indiscernibility positively, as the crucible of the emergence of the new. Far from being zones of indifference that absorb and disable activity, they are appetitively overfull of activity on the tendential move. They are veritable cuckoo nests of incipient activity, from which *more* difference eventuates. The logic of mutual inclusion is the logic of *differentiation*: the process of the continuing proliferation of emergent differences.

As already mentioned, to live up to its pragmatic vocation, animal politics must not only think about mutual inclusion; it must practice it. For members of the human species, its practice involves “becoming-animal,” as conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari (see Supplements 1 and 2, below). Animal thinking-doing avoids the too facile gesture of simply blurring generic differences. It is not content to deconstruct, or to preach the virtues of the hybrid (the concept of hybridization is based on mixes not between tendencies, but between already-given forms, and its logic is combinatory rather than creative). Animal thought does in fact affirm generic differences—differences in kind—but in its own way: in absolute survey. It affirms them without attributing any foundational status to them. It plays them with, and against, continuums of differences in degree, ultimately sweeping them all up in the interpenetrating movement of still-more-difference-producing tendency. It immanently surveys the inclusion of differences in the field of life and consciousness, affirming them from the singular angle of mutually inclusive becoming.

12. Animal politics is a *politics of becoming*, even—especially—of the human.

13. Strenuous critiques, on grounds of anthropomorphism, are sometimes leveled against approaches, like the one advanced here, that affirm the mutual inclusion of the human and nonhuman forms of life on the same continuum of animal life. The charge is that this kind of approach necessarily falls into the anthropomorphic trap of projecting human characteristics on nonhuman animals, most especially when the continuum is also understood in terms of a mutual inclusion of consciousness and life.

The accusation of anthropomorphism is launched in the name of respecting difference. You’re talking about animal thought? Animal af-

fects and emotions? Animal desire? Animal creativity? Animal subjectivity even? Projection, pure difference-denying projection. Nothing but a lack of respect for the radical differences between modes of existence—yet another act of anthropocentric domination erasing the difference of the “other.” Animal politics does not set much store by such critiques. They are still laboring within the traditional logic according to which the only alternative to mutual exclusion is undifferentiation, in this case in the guise of a putative projective confusion. This alternative is only hardened by the notion of “radical” difference.

Such critiques do not take into account the possibility of a logic of tendencies that interpenetrate without blurring. Neither do they take into account the movement of transindividuation creating ever more differences, in an animal parade of vital variations. They know nothing of the reciprocal presupposition of modes of existence in the ceaselessly self-differentiating current of life.

The logic of mutual inclusion dodges the infernal alternative between the solitude of generic differences and the goo of undifferentiation upon which these accusations of anthropomorphism are implicitly based. It places the human on a continuum with the animal precisely in order better to respect the proliferation of differences: the movement of nature by which life always goes a-differing. It easily turns the accusation of anthropomorphism against the accusers. Is it not the height of human arrogance to suppose that animals do not have thought, emotion, desire, creativity, or subjectivity? Is that not to consign animals yet again to the status of automatons? Even the agnostic position on these questions gives too much credence to the mechanist model of animal life. The agnostic position consists simply in refusing to pronounce on the issues, avowedly out of a respect for difference, but one that is overwrought, verging on piety. But is not to remain silent on the nature of differences dangerously close to silencing difference? What lack of respect! And if animal thought, emotion, desire, creativity, and subjectivity are in fact affirmed, but without the hard philosophical work of reexamining the very logic of difference, it results in an all-too-easy pluralism based on all-too-human tolerance. The barbed accusation of anthropomorphism misses its target, and sees its arrow turn back against itself.

The animal politics approach advanced here inverts the critique. Not in the sense, of course, of affirming the human projection of its own characteristics on the animal. Quite the opposite, it envelops the human in an *integrated animo-centrism* in which it loses its a priori dominance without, however, either its difference or those of its animal peers being blurred or erased. It calls on the human to become animal, not on animals to renounce vital powers long wrongly assumed to be the sole province of the human.

Note: The cutoff point of the “animal continuum” is unassignable, as is that of life. Animality and life cannot be strictly demarcated from the nonorganic. This is an inescapable consequence of affirming the logic of mutual inclusion. Calling nature’s continuum of mutual inclusion “animal” is, from this point of view, somewhat arbitrary. Continuums of tendential mixing are most conveniently grasped in the middle. This is because the poles of tendential movements are ideal: movements from a starting point that was never occupied, because in point of actual fact there has never been anything other than mixtures in nature; and movements to a destination point that is never reached, because tendencies never end, so that mixings never cease. Another way of saying this is that tendencies are defined by *virtual limits*.⁶² Speaking of animality is a way of starting in the middle, as Deleuze and Guattari advise is always best (1987, 21–23, 25, 293). Pragmatically, it is always best to start smack in the middle of the glorious mess that is the actual world, where lived abstraction is always already spiked with lived importance, giving thinking-doing real stakes. The continuum of nature could just as easily be called the continuum of creativity, or of consciousness, or of instinct, or of life, or even of matter (redefined in such a way as not to be mutually exclusive of these or of the virtual, yielding an “incorporeal materialism”).⁶³ Or—why not?—even of the plant. The choice of “animal continuum” as the dominant appellation here has a simple but crucial motivation: with a little imagination, it allows the real stakes to revolve around play.

“Even of the plant”: Bergson, in keeping with his logic of differential mutual inclusion, describes an interlacing of tendencies such that the plant participates in animality and vice versa:

Let us say that no definite characteristic distinguishes the plant from the animal. Attempts to define the two kingdoms strictly have always

come to naught. There is not a single property of vegetable life that is not found, in some degree, in certain animals; not a single characteristic feature of the animal that has not been seen in certain species or at certain moments in the vegetable world. Naturally, therefore, biologists enamored of clean-cut concepts have regarded the distinction between the two kingdoms as artificial. They would be right, if definition in this case must be made, as in the mathematical and physical sciences, according to certain statical attributes which belong to the object defined and are not found in any other. Very different, in our opinion, is the kind of definition which befits the sciences of life. There is no manifestation of life which does not contain, in a rudimentary state—either latent or potential—the essential characters [differences in kind] of most other manifestations. The difference is in the proportions [difference of degree]. But this very difference of proportion will suffice to define the group, if we can establish that it is not accidental, and that the group as it evolves, tends more and more to emphasize these particular characters. In a word, *the group must not be defined by the possession of certain characters [following a substance-predicate logic], but by its tendency to emphasize them [tendential differentiation setting difference in kind and degree together in self-transforming movement]*. From this point of view, taking tendencies rather than states [or substances] into account, we find that vegetables and animals may be precisely defined and distinguished, and that they correspond to two divergent developments of life. (Bergson 1998, 105–106)

Simondon makes a similar point, calling the animal an “inchoate plant” and arguing that there are no “substantial differences” enabling categorical distinctions between kingdoms, genres, and species (Combes 2013, 22–23).⁶⁴ From this point of view, the “animal continuum” could also be called the “plant continuum,” depending on which middle one chooses to begin from, and for which conceptually constructive strategic reasons, leading to which definitions and distinctions, to what effect. The choice is not really arbitrary. It is thoroughly pragmatic. The choice of middle will have consequences for how all of the philosophical concepts involved play out, in their relations with each other. Abductively anticipating these, modulating them in advance, constitutes the speculative element. The

coherence of the conceptual continuum needs to be integrally reinvented at every rebeginning, so that philosophy itself is in continual emergent variation.

Which brings us to another warning: beware of philosophies that tout themselves in overly serious apocalyptic or messianic terms as the be-all and end-all of philosophy. These philosophies need a small dose of the modesty of the plant and a heavy dose of the playfulness of the animal to give them an enactive reflexive distance on their own importance (OOO, are you listening?). Supplement 3 returns to the issue of categorical distinctions and cutoff points.

14. Instinct runs the full length of the integrated animal continuum, along reciprocally presupposing lines of ever-diversifying variation. These lines of variation stretch all the way through to the most human of accomplishments, including of a linguistic nature. The self-driving movement of instinct, under the propulsion of the supernormal tendency, is what operationally includes the human in the animal. To think the human is to think the animal, and to think the animal is to think instinct. Would it even be possible to conceive of an animal without instinct? Why, then, the widespread embarrassment at the term? Why must it always be played down, like some beastly Victorian secret best left unsaid? *Animal politics has no fear of instinct.*