

Abstract



İrem Güven

A Relational Ontology for the Climate Era: Ecological Assemblages

- Two major responses to the global climate crisis are reductive because they function on a supposed human condition of superiority over Nature. The first prescribes to 'protect Nature,' which reduces the problem to preserving the environment in a pure, untouched form. The second aims at carrying out a techno-fix, or relying purely on techno-scientific solutions such as afforestation or using certain chemicals that would remove carbon from the atmosphere. The first reduces natural existence to a moral objective for rational human subjects, and the second focuses solely on the 'world of objects'. However different both approaches might seem, they converge in affirming the modern hierarchy between subjects and objects.
- Deleuzian ontology of machines and assemblages might offer us a third way. His Spinoza-inspired definition of Nature as "an immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual," and "its pieces [as] the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations" situates human beings within Nature, denying them a purely benevolent position of the protector or the transcendent subject endowing meaning to the plurality of natural events. Two main characteristics of this approach can be summarized as follows. First, it is a transition from a subject-oriented ontology to a relational ontology, bringing individuals rather than subjects to the foreground. This allows a redefinition of subjects and objects as machines and functionalities, which leads to the second point: focusing on the complexity of Nature and thus avoiding the reductions outlined above.
- Even though Deleuze might not be the first philosopher to come to mind in the lineage of environmental thinkers, I will argue that he is doing an eco-philosophy. To this aim, a general outline of Deleuzian ontology, which, by rendering the categories of content and expression commensurable, replaces the modernist/dualist ontologies of form/matter, thing/meaning, signifier/signified will be presented. Second, by exploring the three megatrata (the inorganic stratum (matter), organic stratum (life), and alloplastic stratum (culture)), the continuity between humans and non-human living and non-living individuals will be demonstrated. Finally, why the notion of ecological assemblage is not another 'theory of everything' totalizing the multiplicity of beings will be explained.



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